

COMMUNICATION IN TRANSIT:
A STUDY OF NEWSROOM CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Presented to the MU School of Journalism Faculty

In partial fulfillment

of requirements for

A Masters of Arts

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November 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention all the help I've received on my way to completing this degree. I want to thank my family for supporting my decision to continue with my schooling, and my girlfriend for her encouragement and assistance through these past two years. I would also like to thank the faculty at the University of Missouri School of Journalism for providing an excellent education experience. I also would like to thank my research supervisors Sandy Schiefer and Edward McCain. Finally, I must also thank Reuben Stern for convincing me to undertake the New York Program and helping navigate through a crazy and unforgettable few months in the city.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the nexus of communication between the developers and users of newsroom content management systems at organizations which have built their own backend software. Gathering insight through a series of interviews with various members of these news organizations, this project aims to provide news organizations the beginnings of a framework to address technology change and navigate through a period in which most newsrooms are facing some amount of upheaval due to strained systems and outdated technologies. By examining how, where and why users and developers communicate, the news industry may be able to better prepare for future shifts and new platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Newsrooms are in a period of change, now perhaps more than ever before. Revenue streams, technologies and workflows are rapidly shifting in order to meet the needs of a changing audience. As a result, the tools required to make a newsroom execute quality journalism have also changed. In recent years, many large news organizations have taken steps to build the newsrooms' custom tools and systems to manage the daily production of the news. These custom content management systems (CMS) are often backed by full teams of developers and product team members ensuring the implementation and success of these systems.

I chose to look into the proprietary newsroom CMS after my time at the Columbia Missourian. It was my first experience in a working newsroom, and after using the system in place there, I quickly realized that navigating the CMS and the tools surrounding it could often be challenging and frustrating. It was my goal to speak with those in the industry with experience navigating these challenges, and I believed that those organizations with full development and product teams would be able to provide insight into how journalists can better understand and navigate the technologies in their newsroom, and how they can best communicate their needs with developers.

Though the Missourian (and most small news operations) do not build its systems from the ground up, there's still a great deal of communication between users and developers to ensure that the CMS works properly, and to ensure the newsroom is able to troubleshoot effectively. It was around this communication that I chose to specifically focus my research.

I scouted the media landscape for potential news operations that had built its systems from the ground up. In doing so, I realized that the best chance to not only speak with people at these organizations, but to use them in a hands-on way to better understand them, was to travel to a media hub. I was fortunate to be able to take part in the University's New York program. Through the program, I have been able to meet with and speak to various actors across the media landscape, take hands-on tours of various newsroom products and learn more about newsroom communications and partake in an internship that has been invaluable in learning about the media landscape.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

Introduction

The first portion of my project consisted of a professional skills component. For this portion, I moved to New York City on August 20th to begin as an intern with Modern Luxury Magazines. Though I had originally hoped to find a position in which I could attempt to answer my research questions (a newsroom with a proprietary CMS), the strict nature of the criteria made this difficult to achieve. Thus, I was presented an opportunity to work for Manhattan Magazine as an editorial assistant, one of the many magazines under the Modern Luxury Umbrella, and I took it.

Why Modern Luxury? I was interested in working for Manhattan Magazine for a few reasons. During my interview, I was told that they seldom have male interns, due to the particular subject matter in the magazine. I felt that it would be a good experience for me to get outside my comfort zone and cover topics that I wouldn't normally choose. Since I'd had experience working in an internship role at a local-focused magazine in the past, I felt that my past knowledge would carry over to help make my time there more productive.

It took a little while to come to grips with the idea of working for a luxury lifestyle publication. I've covered topics far outside my realm of taste and price, and working for a consumer magazine can often put some of the journalistic ideals we learn in the academic setting to the test. However, during my short time there, I've learned more about the industry than I could ever have in a pure academic setting.

During my internship at Manhattan Magazine, my duties have included a wide range of tasks. In order of volume: Fact checking, upcoming story/issue research, communicating with PR, story writing, transcription, editing, and miscellaneous projects.

When I first started, I wasn't sure what to expect, or how involved I was going to be. The internship isn't paid, and normally their interns don't work 30 hour weeks. After I arrived, I quickly realized just how involved I would be. Manhattan has a tiny editorial staff, a single editor-in-chief, an associate editor (my supervisor) and interns. That's basically it. As a result, interns are responsible for near everything editorial bar writing features. We right front-of-book stories, back of book blurbs and put together calendars and agendas.

All fact checking is done by interns at Manhattan Magazine, and we also handle most of the art requests. Since a majority of the art isn't produced in-house, we were expected to heavily communicate with PR contacts to receive art for stories, product roundups, etc. We also conducted research and helped manage the budget/lineup for upcoming editions, and transcribed interviews for features. There's been no coffee-fetching peon tasks to do, and there would simply be no time for it.

Through all these tasks, I've learned a great deal, specifically about how write in the voice of the publication, and how to successfully navigate the world of PR. I've seen my name on the glossy page for the first time, and through all the challenges, it has been a rewarding experience.

FIELD NOTES

The following are my field notes for each week up the time of authoring this document.

This will include twelve weeks of updates as they pertain to my internship and progress regarding the analysis portion of my professional project. Each week is formatted to answer specific questions as required by the New York Program. These questions will be listed with each update as it is listed.

Week 1:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? (*Also include links to any published work.*)
 - I started my internship at Manhattan Magazine on Friday, August 24. During my time at the office, I completed routine paperwork to begin an internship, but was also immediately tasked with writing two articles for the front-of-book of the October issue. I learned that interns are central to the publication, and are responsible for all fact-checking and write a majority of the front-of-book articles. I am excited to be incorporated into the process, and hope that I can continue to improve my writing, editing and fact-checking skills throughout the course of the semester.
- 1a. [*For graduate students only*]: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I met with with Professor Stern to discuss my plan of attack for the coming weeks. We discussed a handful of items related to my project, including potential sites. I plan on revising my interview questions and creating a master list of potential interview sites and will be sending out emails no later than the end of the coming week.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - Though I only worked one day, the two articles I wrote were both related to products or services highlighted in the coming issue. I haven't written in that style much over the past few semesters, and shaking off the rust was a task in itself. I

will need to continue to work on finding the appropriate voice and matching the tone of the particular publication, which I believe will come with more practice.

- What could you have done better?
 - Judging by the editing comments on my articles, I will need to work on straddling the line between writing about a product and endorsing/advertising for that product.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - Thus far, everything has gone according to plan.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the coming week, I will be tasked with a wide variety of tasks. I hope to learn more about the fact-checking and copy editing procedures in place at Manhattan Magazine, and am excited to meet the managing editor and start working more closely with her.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - I hope to have a master list of potential sites compiled, and emails sent by the end of the week. I also hope to refine my list of questions to more accurately inquire about my project topic.

Week 2:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? (*Also include links to any published work.*)
 - This week I mostly fact checked existing pages. My internship supervisor was out of the office, so she provided a stack of items for me to fact check and copy edit. I was able to find some errors and make some changes that will impact the published product. I have yet to meet any of my fellow interns, and believe that work will really begin full swing this coming week.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I did research on potential interview sites and have begun to send emails to potential interviewees. I hope to begin scheduling dates by the beginning of next week.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned that copy editing and fact-checking are even more essential than I thought. I found numerous errors in the pieces that I checked, and in doing

so, have realized that even established professionals regularly make mistakes. A second set of eyes always helps.

- What could you have done better?
 - I didn't receive much feedback this week, but in my research for the coming magazine calendar, I found that I struggled to find good matches for the events. I hope to refine my searching techniques in the coming weeks to help improve my results.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - It was a quiet week, and my only complaint was that lacking a supervisor made me feel a bit lost, especially so early in the process.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - I hope to learn more about the research procedures in place for the magazine. I also expect to be conducting real interviews with PR professionals, and learning how to talk with them to quickly glean information will be useful. I also hope to be introduced to more people, including the editor-in-chief of the publication and my fellow interns in the following week.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - In the following week, I plan to continue to send out emails and refine my interview questions and list of potential sites. I hope to be receiving replies and scheduling dates within the week.

Week 3:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? (*Also include links to any published work.*)
 - This week, I researched and wrote articles for the November issue agenda, which is a calendar of events. This included contacting numerous organizations to request art, which put me in contact with PR professionals. I also continued to fact check pages for the upcoming issues, met my fellow interns for the first time, and met the publisher of the magazine. I also worked to transcribe a lengthy interview for the magazine.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - Over the past week, I have sent and received emails to establish visits to various newsrooms to get hands on experience with content management systems. I have made contact with the New York Times, and now have plans to visit their

newsroom in early October to conduct some interviews and take a tour. I have also been reading up more on Ux and design to ensure I am well versed in some of the development vocabulary.

- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned how to make and maintain contacts with PR professionals. Working at a consumer magazine, a large majority of the art and photos are sourced from various PR organizations representing the product/event. It was interesting to see how communications between publication and PR take place.
- What could you have done better?
 - This week was great. I felt very productive and was always busy with something related to the magazine. My coordinator returned on Wednesday, which helped me feel more directed in my work. I would like to continue to improve my magazine writing skills and believe that with more practice, I will.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - My only challenge has been connecting to my content. When writing about a restaurant or a product, I often feel disjointed, considering I've never eaten at these places, or never had any experience with the product. My writing sometimes feels more like trying to sell the product than anything else. Though I understand that consumer magazines often operate a bit closer to the marketing/PR sector than other news outlets, I am still not quite comfortable with that. Though I value the skills I am learning in regards to editing and workflow, I struggle to gain much meaning out of the topics I'm covering. I believe that this is just part of working for this kind of publication, and regardless of these feelings, I am learning tons of valuable information about the media landscape.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the following week I hope to conduct my first interview for a story. I believe that in conducting this interview, it will help address the disconnect I have been feeling with the content. Though the interview is with a PR person and not anyone directly connected to the restaurant on which the story focuses, I still hope that this will make my writing feel a bit more like what I am used to.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - In the week ahead, I hope to continue to send and receive emails to establish meetings and interviews. I hope to have a more complete and structured list of questions ready, and will ideally have all my sites selected and confirmed within the next week or two.

Week 4:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? (*Also include links to any published work.*)
 - This past week I wrote a few pieces for publication, continued with the normal fact checking, and started work on the december issue budget. The interns are responsible for taking all the stories the editors find and placing them and organizing them on the budget, and this week I was in contact with the managing editor working to complete the process. I'll see my name in print in less then two weeks, with the publication of the October issue, which is exciting.
- 1a. [*For graduate students only*]: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week, I learned that the Washington Post was not interested in allowing me to conduct interviews. As a result, I've moved on to other organizations, and am pursuing leads at BuzzFeed and Mic. I spoke with the parties at The New York Times, and though I don't have an official date nailed down, I have received word that they'll be able to make it happen. I am still awaiting a response from those at Vox, and will be following up with them soon.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about workflows. In my work putting together the budget, I glimpsed into the inner workings of the magazine workflow. It wasn't the most...glamorous process and I imagine there is a more effective system that could be enacted. That said, Modern Luxury's system gets the job done, even if it's just email blasting an intern with a million events and asking them to fill up a google doc.
- What could you have done better?
 - This past week I had to write a story on a beauty product. It was a challenging story, and my first draft was a real stinker. I want to improve on my skills writing about topics I don't have much experience with. Beauty is outside my wheelhouse, and as a result, I think my story suffered. However, it's a challenge I look forward to facing, and I believe that my second draft was much improved after I sat down and did more research into the product.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - This week was challenge free, aside from the above mentioned story. In terms of research, I was disappointed the Post turned me down, but perhaps their rejection

will open new doors. I'm optimistic that the folks at Mic and BuzzFeed will be more willing to work with me.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the week ahead I hope to continue refining my writing skills. I'll do this by writing stories and finishing up drafts.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - In the following week, I plan on touching base with Vox again, as they have yet to get back to me. I also hope to make contact with folks at BuzzFeed and Mic. Further, I plan on getting a surefire date lined up for interviews at the Times.

Week 5:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week, I worked on a wedding presentation powerpoint for our managing editor at a conference, wrote a handful of articles, and finalized the budget for November. I also conducted research for the December budget and did the usual slew of fact checking.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - I sent emails to BuzzFeed and Mic, and I established a contact point at the Mic organization to speak with a developer about their system in the next week or so. I also heard back from BuzzFeed, and have a contact there who is asking around to see about getting me in there.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - I learned how to refine my writing on a topic that I wasn't familiar with. Last week I mentioned a beauty product story I had to write, and this week I was able to take the edits and construct a better, more well-researched story. I did a more in-depth dive into the product and reached out to PR for that company.
- What could you have done better?
 - This week was pretty solid. If there was anything I could have done better, it would have been to find more research for December. I struggled to find many of the story topics we look for, but I believe it is partially due to the month itself.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?

- This week, I didn't run in to any challenges. I'm excited for my work to be in a published issue next week.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the week ahead I hope to continue writing and improving my story skills.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week I plan on doing an interview with a developer at Mic, and I also hope to establish contacts with a reporter and editor there who will be willing to do an interview as well. I also hope to hear back from BuzzFeed about potential interviews there.

Week 6:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week, the October issue went to print. It didn't shake up my work flow or anything, other than checking the final issue for page numbers and a few things of that nature. Beyond that, I did work as usual, fact checking and editing stories, writing a few pieces, etc. Below is the link to the October online edition. You can search my name to see the stories I'd had included.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - For my project this week, I set up a date to interview the Mic developer, and am preparing for my trip to the New York Times next week. I also touched base with my contact at BuzzFeed, and reached out to another contact at Vox, but have not yet heard back.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week, I learned that even after fact checking, a piece can still have errors. I received word that a piece I checked was incorrect in a few places, due to having mixed up a New York neighborhood. Luckily, the mistake was caught and it was not a big deal.
- What could you have done better?
 - In relation to the above comment, I need to be more vigilant in my fact-checking process. Even if the words are spelled correctly and the grammar is in place, other mistakes of syntax or accuracy can still be present.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - This week was good, no challenges to report.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the following week, I hope to see what the holiday issues look like, and learn how to plan for such issues.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week, I hope to have my interview questions prepped and ready, so that my interviews next week will go smoothly. I also really hope to hear back from my contacts at the third news organization, either Vox or BuzzFeed.

Week 7:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week I worked primarily on file storage. I was sent a large quantity of images to be used for the upcoming bridal issues, and my job was to file them in the appropriate location via the server. Pretty mundane stuff. I did, however, get to work on a story about a new restaurant and am going to be speaking with the sommelier about the location in the coming week.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - My project didn't go far this week, but in the coming days, I have interviews set up throughout the week. I'm speaking with the Mic developer on Monday, and am going to be going to the New York Times on Wednesday. I also heard back from my contact at BuzzFeed, and she confirmed that she is still working on finding some suitable candidates.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - I learned about gathering art for the magazine. This week's file storage tasks showed me a bit about just much magazine art comes from PR. I also feel that I improved on my lede writing, at least for the one story I wrote this week, as my editor complimented the story.
- What could you have done better?
 - There have been a few errors getting through the fact-checking process. Though they were not attributed to me, all the interns need to make sure we remain diligent in this process. The magazine team is small, and it is essential that the eyes on the page are catching as much as possible.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - Nothing to report this week.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - In the following week, I look to do a brief interview (the first for a story while at this magazine). I also hope to write another piece and work on diligence in my fact-checking procedure.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week, I have numerous interviews scheduled. I plan on knocking some of those out of the way, and also am planning on hearing back from a handful of other contacts. I also am reaching out to another organization in case one of the planned sites falls through.

Week 8:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - The past week, I worked on what's called the Luxe list, which is a yearly collection of best-ofs featured in the January edition. My work was mostly of the research and find images nature, but overall it was cool to work on a special piece.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I visited the New York Times. I met with a number of actors across company and conducted a series of interviews with three panels which met my criteria. It was above and beyond anything I expected. Everyone who spoke with me was insightful and eager to share their experiences. I learned exactly what I set out to in my time there.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about working on tight deadline in the world of magazine. The Luxe list seemed to have been pushed until the last minute, and so the work that I did on that was time sensitive. Me and the other interns were cranking through a massive list, trying to rapidly distill and record information.
- What could you have done better?
 - Nothing in particular this week. The interviews and media tours took a few days from me, so I suppose it would have been nice to be at the office more.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - Nothing to report this week.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - This week, I have an interview with a master sommelier on his new bar program, which will be my first real interview while working here at the magazine.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week, I have an interview with the Mic developer, and have established contact to speak with other Mic candidates. I also hope to formally establish and date my last site and schedule my project defense.

Week 9:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week I conducted an interview for a story, wrote a piece or two and completed some editing. I also had my mid-term review for my internship.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I conducted an interview, established and scheduled another interview, and reached out to establish connections for the final remaining ones. I plan to have them all finished by the end of the month. I also began working on transcribing my completed interviews.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about how to look for work in the magazine industry. During my mid-term eval, I talked with my supervisor about the process of finding a position after graduation. She expressed that freelancing and making connections was a good way to try and find an in somewhere.
- What could you have done better?
 - This week was good. Still working on upping my fact-checking game.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - Nothing to report this week.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - This week I hope to continue writing and editing. Nothing out of the ordinary. I received glowing praise during my eval, and I hope to continue on that course.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?

- This week I plan on conducting a handful of interviews, furthering the transcription process and beginning to write up the final report.

Week 10:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? (*Also include links to any published work.*)
 - This week, I worked on a new type of story, which was a by the numbers kind of piece that uses a number of...numbers to express a concept. This particular topic centered around the MoMA's 80th anniversary. I was also assigned to work on a big feature list for the January edition, which is basically a best-of style piece for all the luxury services in the city.
- 1a. [*For graduate students only*]: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I conducted another interview and am close to finishing the interviewing process. I have one scheduled today, one later this week, and two outstanding that I hope to finish by the end of this week. Ideally I'll have them all completed by the end of next week, Nov. 5. This will give me about a week with all my info to complete a first draft, but I have already started work on the draft with what information I currently have. I discussed the dates with my committee chair, and plan to have the first draft in by Nov. 11.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about list writing. The features thing I was assigned is a big story with a ton of research involved. In working on this piece, I am better refining my information gathering skills for speed and accuracy across a variety of topics.
 - What could you have done better?

I've struggled with a PR person this week, as she wasn't very helpful in getting me the required materials, and was also kind of obtuse. Though I don't think I handled the situation poorly, I wonder if I might have been able to phrase my email communications in a more productive way to better express my request.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - No real challenges this week. Just busy with a handful of assignments and working on successfully managing my time.
- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?

- In the following week I plan on diving further into the feature piece that we're working on. I also am finishing up a few more stories and completing some editing assignments.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week, I plan on finishing or coming close to finishing all my interviews. I also plan on beginning the writing process with some of the information I currently have. I hope to have all the information gathered by no later than Nov. 5, hopefully sooner.

Week 11:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week I worked on the feature list assignment, completed a few stories, and received feedback on my editing. Attached are my pieces for the November issue.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I worked on transcribing and writing my first draft. I plan to have it finished and sent to my committee chair by November 11. I still have two outstanding interviews however, and am unsure how to proceed, as I worry they won't get back to me.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about collaboration on a larger project. My fellow interns and I have each done work on this list feature, and we had to divide up the various sections to ensure it would be a manageable project.
- What could you have done better?
 - This week I think I could have been quicker with turning around assignments. Some of the work I did was a bit more in-depth, and thus, took me longer to complete. However, I still believe I could have operated a faster pace.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - Nothing for my internship. My only concern is with the final two interviews for my project. I have one outstanding for both Mic and The Daily Beast. Both places I had a contact reach out and get people to agree to speak with me, but I've thus far been unable to get in contact with them. I've requested other contacts, but I'm not sure those will pan out in time. Any advice would be appreciated in this regard.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - This week I plan to finish my section of the feature, finish going back over my editing work.
- 5a. *[For graduate students only]*: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week I hope to finish my first draft. I'd like to finish my interviews as well.

Week 12:

- What all did you accomplish in your internship over the past week? *(Also include links to any published work.)*
 - This week I wrote some more articles on events, tidied up some existing pieces and worked more on the list assignment. Nothing too new. Also did an absolute ton of fact checking for the upcoming issue.
- 1a. *[For graduate students only]*: What did you accomplish related to your project over the past week?
 - This week I completed my transcriptions and am putting the finishing touches on my project draft. Almost there.
- What all did you learn, via your internship (or otherwise, if you haven't started), about journalism/strategic communication? Be specific.
 - This week I learned about the flood of fact checking. It made up most of my work load for the week, as we prepare for getting the next issue put together. Not sure why it came in all at once, but it's tough to stay diligent page after page after page after page ... but I made it through and caught quite a few big errors in the type.
- What could you have done better?
 - I could have better organized my PR communications, not just for the week, but for the past month. It can be difficult to manage so many emails going in and out, and a few things got missed. Nothing bad came of it, but I'm going to start making a document or spreadsheet to date each email and update it regularly.
- Are you facing any issues/challenges/frustrations? If so, what are they and how could you address it?
 - The main challenge I've faced recently is finding new ways to write similar stories. I feel that many of my pieces are just regurgitating PR information, and this makes for a shallow article. I wish that I had more freedom to actually attend the restaurants I write about, or go to the stores that we feature, before the article needs to cross the line. In some cases, I could take time out of my own day to do this after work, but due to the price point of many of these places, it would be a very hard expense to justify. I think that perhaps more in depth reporting could

give me more inspiration, but I'm not entirely sure how much one can glean from reading a website and other press material. Maybe I'll request more pieces that involve actual interviews.

- What do you hope to accomplish and/or learn at your internship in the week ahead? And how do you plan to make that happen?
 - This week I'm finishing the list feature, which will be a long grind to get all the entries completed. Hopefully it turns out well, and I think, provided I put in the time to ensure that the article is as serviceable as possible, it will be a good piece.
- 5a. [*For graduate students only*]: What do you plan to accomplish related to your project in the week ahead?
 - This week I'm turning in a draft to my committee chair, planning to make whatever changes are suggested, and then turn in a draft to the full committee in preparation for my project defense.

PHYSICAL WORK EXAMPLES

Included in my physical work will be the document form drafts for all articles written over the course of my internship. These documents went through numerous edits before making it as a final, published product. Not all drafts wound up being published, but a majority made it to the magazine. The stories that made it to print have scans of the published page following the draft. Also included are scans of a small selection of the pages I worked to fact check. I did not include every fact checked page, as the number was staggering, and it would have been unwieldy to put every single scan within this project document.

OCTOBER

MANH_Oct_FD_Guide_Inhouse

Head: On the House

Deck: INHOUSE offers membership service that connects both sides of the restaurant industry.

An eye for quality, a taste for excellence and a healthy respect for hospitality are few of the prerequisites to a membership with INHOUSE. Founded by Benjy Leibowitz, former maitre d' at NoMad, INHOUSE unites 60 restaurants across New York and London in a membership program that connects patrons with a network of fine dining. The service brings together industry professionals and food aficionados eager to take part in the same dining culture. Personal introductions to management accompany every restaurant visit, and members can expect to be treated as a regular at any of the participating restaurants, from abcv to Wildair. INHOUSE also provides variety of exclusive benefits, including in-demand restaurant reservations, curated dining experiences and invitations to industry and member events. Membership is extended to applicants who are active in the city's dining culture and requires an application complete with at least one restaurant sponsor. *From \$1,550 annually, inhousenewyork.com –Christian DeVerger*

MANH_Oct_Now_Rhoback

Head: Office to outdoors

Deck: Rhoback blends activity and style in polo line.

Rhoback was established with a key principle in mind: activity. From a morning at the office to an afternoon on the golf course, Rhoback clothing is made for men on the go. The flagship polos are constructed with a breathable, moisture-wicking performance fabric, lightweight enough to keep cool and tough enough to transition between any activity. A blend of polyester and spandex makes for a flexible fit, and quick drying breathability ensures a shirt that can keep up with an adventurous lifestyle. Tagless and low maintenance washing means clothing that's as easy to care for as it is to wear. Available in a variety of bright, striped patterns, each polo features a signature design element inspired by the namesake Rhodesian Ridgeback breed of dog. Patterns are also available in bandana form, an apt accessory for a canine companion sharing in the adventure. *Rhoback performance polos \$79, rhoback.com –Christian DeVerger*

MANH_Oct_SC_OTS_RH

Hed: Six-story Soiree

Dek: Influencers and stars converged to celebrate RH Interior Design's new gallery, RH New York.

By Christian DeVerger

The Party More than 1,500 influencers from the worlds of design, food, music and more convened in the Meatpacking District, where RH unveiled its new six-story gallery. Guests enjoyed numerous experiences, from a caviar bar to rooftop rosé, all to the benefit of Friends of the Highline and Free Arts NYC. The Guests RH Chairman and CEO Gary Friedman brought together a star-studded guest list including Portia de Rossi, Karlie Kloss and Martha Stewart. The Highlights The first look at the one-of-a-kind retail space included entertainment by DJ Nora En Pure, fresh bellinis from Campiri NYC, and gourmet bites from Brendan Sodikoff.

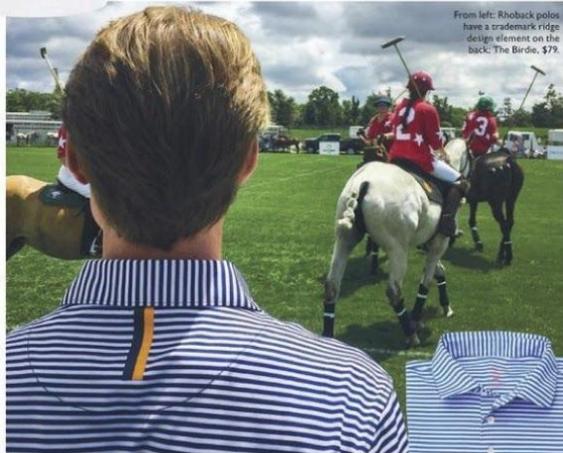
NOW IN NYC



Skin Laundry Rx offers individualized skincare treatment plans via subscription service.

ROUTINE MAINTENANCE
LAUNDRY LIST

Yen Reis revolutionized the facial when she founded **Skin Laundry** in 2013. Her laser facial treatment boasts efficiency and effectiveness with the brand's signature 15-minute Laser & Light Facial, which cleans the skin, stimulates collagen, reduces pore size, and treats inflammation and discoloration. For something slightly stronger, Skin Laundry now offers an Ultra Fractional Treatment to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, unwanted pigmentation and photo damage. The nonablative process has three steps: First, the skin is primed with a zap of energy from a YAG laser. Then, a fractional resurfacing laser is used to reverse sun damage, improve texture and create microscopic skin channels so that the final step—a Hydration Boost treatment—is its most effective. The new laser service in conjunction with the launch of Skin Laundry Rx (a personalized, direct-to-consumer skincare prescription service set to be available in New York in January) makes Skin Laundry a strong addition to New Yorkers' self-care. 112 W. Broadway, skinlaundry.com —AG



From left: Rhoback polos have a trademark ridge design element on the back: The Birde, \$79.

RETAIL RAP

IN THE GAME

Rhoback was established with a key principle in mind: activity. From a morning at the office to afternoon golf at The Maidstone Club, Rhoback clothing is made for men on the go. The flagship polos are constructed with a breathable, moisture-wicking performance fabric, lightweight enough to keep cool and tough enough to transition between any activity. A blend of polyester and spandex makes for a flexible fit, and quick-drying breathability ensures a shirt that can keep up with an adventurous lifestyle. Tagless and low-maintenance washing means clothing that's as easy to care for as it is to wear. Available in a variety of bright, striped patterns, each polo features a signature ridge design element inspired by the namesake Rhodesian Ridgeback breed of dog. Patterns are also available in bandana form, an apt accessory for a canine companion sharing in the adventure. *Rhoback performance polo, \$79, rhoback.com —Christian DeVogler*



From left: Smart Caviar sterling silver and 18K gold two-tone bracelet for the Apple Watch, \$3,500, and Smart Caviar sterling silver and diamond bracelet for the Apple Watch, \$8,500, both by Lagos at Bloomingdale's.

ONE TO WATCH

TRANSCENDING TIME

Lagos debuts the first-ever fine jewelry bracelet designed for the Apple Watch. The collection, titled Smart Caviar, features four unisex pieces in a range of sterling silver, 18K gold and diamonds. "I really wanted to create a bracelet that would transform the Apple Watch from casual to a jewelry watch," says Lagos founder and Creative Director Steven Lagos. Building off its traditional Caviar technique, which focuses on intricate and precise metal beading, the Smart Caviar collection brings rich texture and an alluring sense of geometry to the smartwatch. The bracelet's detailed design edges the Apple Watch toward a more elegant tomorrow, seamlessly blending luxury and functionality. —Casey Weissman

RHOBACK PHOTOS COURTESY OF RHOBACK

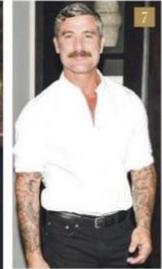
on the SCENE

BY CHRISTIAN DEVERGER



THE HOME FRONT
Local luminaries and stars converged to celebrate RH Interior Design's new gallery, **RH New York**.

1. Karlie Kloss **2.** Shayna Taylor and Ryan Seacrest **3.** Guests received mini bottles of Ketel One. **4.** Portia de Rossi **5.** Gary Friedman and Elizabeth Chambers **6.** Sarah and Erin Foster **7.** Douglas Friedman



THE PARTY More than 1,500 tastemakers from the worlds of design, food, music and more convened in the Meatpacking District, where RH unveiled its new six-story gallery. Guests enjoyed numerous experiences, from a caviar bar to rooftop rosé, all to the benefit of Friends of The High Line and Free Arts NYC. **THE SCENE** RH chairman and CEO **Gary Friedman** brought together a star-studded guest list including **Portia de Rossi**, **Karlie Kloss** and **Martha Stewart**. **THE HIGHLIGHTS** The first look at the one-of-a-kind retail space included entertainment by DJ **Nora En Pure**, fresh Bellinis from Cipriani NYC and gourmet bites from Au Cheval's **Brendan Sodikoff**.

PHOTOS: L.S. & J. BY BILLY FANELLI & HANCO KALADJANIAN. PHOTO & BY DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/GETTY IMAGES

FOOD & DRINK

THE GUIDE

Enjoy NYC's best restaurants, sorted alphabetically and by neighborhood. Prices reflect average cost of a three-course dinner for one, excluding drinks, tax and tip. Note: Menus change frequently and seasonally, so not all items mentioned may be available at all times.

\$\$\$\$ Very Expensive (\$60 and up) Update
 \$\$\$ Expensive (\$40-\$60) New
 \$\$ Moderate (\$30-\$40) Hot Spot
 \$ Inexpensive (under \$30) Editor's Pick

FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Augustine At Keith McNally's latest brasserie, everything the restaurateur has become known for—atmosphere, vintage Parisian decor, flattering golden lighting—is executed even better than before. **PRO TIP** The cocktail list was created by Dale DeGroff, who pioneered the modern cocktail movement at the Rainbow Room in the 1980s. *5 Beekman St., 212.375.0010, augustineny.com* \$\$\$

North End Grill Inside this Danny Meyer-owned Rockefeller Park space, which overlooks the Hudson River, you'll find a seafood-heavy menu that befits the classic interior. As some patrons flit between tables, others can barely tear themselves away from the wood-grilled duck breast with red cabbage and Lady apples. *104 North End Ave./Murray St., 646.747.1600, northendgrillny.com* \$\$\$

TRIBECA

Atera The intimate 18-seat restaurant is a showcase for executive chef Ronny Emborg's ever-changing prix fixe tasting menu, with small snacks like black currant foie



Radishes and hummus at Loring Place, one of INHOUSE's participating restaurants

ON THE HOUSE

INHOUSE offers a membership service that connects both sides of the restaurant industry.

An eye for quality, a taste for excellence and a healthy respect for hospitality are few of the prerequisites to a membership with **INHOUSE**. Founded by Benjy Leibowitz, former maitre d' at NoMad, INHOUSE unites 60 restaurants across New York and London in a membership program that connects patrons with a network of fine dining. The service brings together industry professionals and food aficionados eager to take part in the same dining culture. Personal introductions to management accompany every restaurant visit, and members can expect to be treated as regulars at any of the participating restaurants, from ABCV to Wildair. INHOUSE also provides a variety of exclusive benefits, including in-demand restaurant reservations, curated dining experiences and invitations to industry events. Membership is extended to applicants who are active in the city's dining culture and requires an application with at least one restaurant sponsor. From \$1,550 annually, inhousenewyork.com —Christian DeVerger

gras "peanuts" and main acts like live scallops with apples and horseradish. Its two Michelin stars and a coveted three-star review from *The New York Times* make it well worth the uberlong wait for a reservation. *77 Warh St./Broadway, 212.226.1444, aterany.com* \$\$\$

Cut **Legendary** California chef Wolfgang Puck brings his signature steakhouse to downtown's

culinary scene in the Four Seasons. While the menu is a detour from his California cuisine, Puck still has his most coveted dinner selections, including many types of meat, like his Japanese wagyu beef and pan-roasted Stonington Maine lobster. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. *99 Church St./Park Place, 646.880.1995, wolfgangpuck.com* \$\$\$

Khe-Yo Executive chef

Soulayphet Schwader, partner Nick Bradley and restaurateur Marc Forgione thought that New York should get to know Laotian cuisine, so they opened Khe-Yo, which serves up items like whole caramelized red snapper with tamarind-peanut sauce and crispy shallots, and ping-sien-moo—Berkshire spare ribs with smashed long bean and cherry tomato. You can even eat the sticky

rice with your hands. *157 Duane St./Hudson St. and W. Broadway, 212.587.1089, kheyo.com* \$\$

Terroir | Tribeca Following the success of *Terroir* in the East Village, former Craft toque Marco Canora and *Terroir* General Manager Paul Griceco brought the popular wine-bar concept to Tribeca. Expect unknown vintners and thrilling

PHOTO BY IZIE BAIGLAV

NOVEMBER

MANH_NOV_SC_OTTS_HarryWinston

Hed: Dazzling display

Dek: Harry Winston hosted a glimmering set to show off its New York Collection.

By Christian DeVerger

The Party Harry Winston Inc. lit up the rainbow room with the unveiling of its New York Collection, a tribute to the city and its lasting influence on Winston’s life and designs. Stars of film and fashion enjoyed an evening of celebration, donning a selection of the new jewelry. **The Guests** Those in attendance included Naomi Watts, sporting the Central Park Mosaic earrings; Camila Coelho in the brilliant emerald-and-diamond City Lights earrings and Angela Sarafyan, wearing City Lights earrings and bracelet with sapphire. **The Highlights** The evening event closed with a surprise performance from award-winning artist Jennifer Hudson, who was also sparkling with a selection of iconic Winston pieces.

MANH_Nov_Now_DetoxMarket

Hed: Coming Clean

Deck: Opening in Manhattan, the seventh Detox Market location offers healthy, eco-friendly cosmetics.

In a market filled with chemically laden products, Detox Market is bringing green beauty to New York with a new flagship store. The “jewel box” building, designed by Suulin Architects, features two stories of white marble, ash-wood fixtures and lush, plant-filled interiors, designed to complement a suite of eco-friendly products. “When we open a new store, we always focus all of our energy on creating a unique experience—a place where clients can ask questions, learn and challenge us while feeling at home,” says founder and CEO Roman Gillard. The space is fully equipped with a top floor dedicated to one-on-one consultations and private treatments. Specializing in the sustainable and chemical-free, Detox Market curates and produces a selection of products for those wishing to step away from toxicity in their day-to-day beauty regimens. Meticulous testing, which includes the maintenance of a comprehensive list of banned ingredients available for customer review, ensures patrons that every product on the shelves, from TaTa Harper to EiR NYC, is an exemplar of wellness in beauty. *76 E. Houston St., thedetoxmarket.com, –Christian DeVerger*

MANH_Nov_FD_guide_Hwaban

Head: Blooming Bounty

Deck: A new modern restaurant offers elegantly plated, Korean-inspired cuisine to the flatiron district.

From tabletop bouquets to desserts with petals of buttercream frosting, florals are key at Mihyun Han's new culinary creation. Hwaban, the latest restaurant from the Kosaka founder and her husband, Key Kim, aims to capture the essence of the flower in each delicate dish. Inspired by Han's South Korean upbringing, the menu blends traditional with contemporary, leading to inventive twists on classics, such as sweet shrimp crudo with frozen tomato pureé, seaweed, pickled cucumber and Korean pear, and king crab poached with poached egg and spinach in pine nut sauce. Each dish is plated with deliberate sensibility, highlighting the natural beauty of ingredients with a focus on floral color. For patrons looking to get a little taste of everything, Hwaban also provides a group dining experience, a full-table affair that includes an array of assorted dishes and soups. The communal table serves as an anchor for the 60-seat space, designed in collaboration with Super Paprika. Austere white marble tables and accents create a clean aesthetic, and rotating floral arrangements and a blossoming light fixture embody the verdant theme, ensuring Hwaban lives up to a name meaning "as beautiful as a flower." *55 W. 19th St., hwaban.com, –Christian DeVerger*

Head: Cookie cause

Dek: An array of cookies and gift items from Cookies For Kid's Cancer help fight the number one most deadly children's disease.

Giving back just got delicious. Nonprofit Cookies for Kid's Cancer has unveiled a new selection of gift sets for the holiday season. Cookie jars, coffee containers and, of course, a choice of any of the ten cookie varieties, are featured in the newest collection, with 100 percent of all profits benefiting childhood cancer research.

Founded in 2008 by Gretchen and Larry Witt after their two-year-old son was diagnosed with cancer, the organization started with one family, 250 volunteers and 96,000 cookies. The Witts raised \$400,000 for childhood cancer in this monumental first round of baking. News quickly spread and support began to pour in from around the nation.

Since Cookies for Kid's Cancer's inception, they have raised over \$10 million for pediatric cancer research. Partnerships with culinary masters from all areas of the industry – from

Christina Tosi of Milk Bar to Loring Place’s Dan Kluger – have extended the reach and scope of the groundbreaking nonprofit, which is celebrating its milestone ten-year anniversary.

Gift set from \$59.99, cookiesforkidscancer.org, – Christian DeVerger

MANH_Nov_FD_Guide_800Degrees

Head: Ovens aflame, Blazing trails

Deck: A new high-heat pizzeria serves up more than traditional pies.

Where there’s smoke there’s pizza at the newest location of Anthony Carron’s Los Angeles-born eatery, 800 Degrees. The restaurant specializes in flame cooking and has designed special stone hearth ovens and woodfired rotisseries to impart fragrant flavors to dishes cooked within. A menu managed by Mario Zeniou sources top quality and local ingredients—vegetables from Long Island farms, Blue Ribbon wild tuna and Pat Lafrieda prime rib and chicken—found in signature dishes, such as lunch-only Power Bowls, a Creekstone Farms Prime Rib and Black Tie Pizza with Pata Negra Iberico Jamon and black truffle burrata. The 135-seat space offers counter service during the day and transforms into an open kitchen at night. A full bar serves up a selection of cocktails, including Smoky LiberTea with apple- and cinnamon-infused bourbon, smoked maple syrup, ice tea and lemon, and a Heat-Blast Margarita with Casa Noble tequila, Stones Ginger Wine, passion fruit, lime and jalapeño is sure to keep the temperature high. *I E. 33rd St., 800degrees.com –Christian Deverger*

MANH_Oct_Nov_DR_NewYorkSplendor

Head: Hallowed Halls

Dek: In her latest book, Wendy Moonan opens a window into the most awe-inspiring rooms in New York.

By Christian DeVerger

Architecture and design journalist Wendy Moonan definitely has an eye for elegance. In a career spanning three decades, she has explored every corner of the country in search of innovative designs and antiques. Her newest work, *New York Splendor: The City’s Most Memorable Rooms* (Rizzoli \$85), showcases the pinnacle of design, from some of the most talented names of the age, as a personal compendium of favorite private spaces in past and present New York.

A grand tour of luxury and taste, the book leads readers through a myriad of designs and styles, from opulent to austere. “My main criterion was simply that each project have the ‘wow’ factor—rooms that elicited, from me, gasps of pleasure and admiration,” Moonan says. “The rooms I have chosen are all about imagination; they invoke a sense of wonder.”

New York Splendor is Moonan’s personal response to the question: What makes a room magical? Each space contains the tangible evidence of her answer—the tented fabric that lines Alex Papachristidis’ foyer, a soaring view of Manhattan from the Four Seasons’ 52nd floor penthouse library, the collection of Old Master portraits that dot the walls of Adolfo F. Sardina’s palatial duplex. Regardless of personal style or taste, Moonan’s exhibition of residential spaces will leave a lasting impression, long after the turn of the page.

Manh_Nov_SC_Agenda

Hed: November

By Christian DeVerger

11/1

The Met Real Estate Council Benefit

Honoring Blackstone Senior Managing Director Frank Cohen, the 23rd annual benefit raises funds to support the museum’s educational programs and features an exhibition viewing, alongside dinner and cocktails. *Chairman’s Circle Table \$100,000, The Met, metmuseum.org*

11/2

The Sound of Stone

Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad illustrates Armenian history with his own works alongside a composition from esteemed Armenian composer and pianist Vache Sharafyan.

Tickets from \$50, The Met, metmuseum.org

11/5

The New York Public Library Lions Gala

In a night dedicated to the presentation of the institution’s highest honor, five recipients will be celebrated for their cultural contributions at the highly anticipated annual event. *Legacy Table \$150,000, The New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwartzman Building, nypl.org*

11/8-11/12

Salon Art + Design fair

Showcasing historical, modern and contemporary furniture, alongside groundbreaking design and art, the seventh edition of the prestigious design fair returns to New York. *Tickets from \$250, Park Avenue Armory, thesalonny.com*

11/8/-11/15

DOC NYC

The largest documentary film festival in America, DOC NYC is a weeklong celebration of the diverse genre across three theaters. *All-access tickets \$750, IFC Center, SVA Theatre, Cinopolis Chelsea, docnyc.net*

11/8-12/1

Mefistofele

Featuring Christian Van Horn, Michael Fabiano, and Angela Meade, Arrigo Boito's only completed opera returns to the Met Opera for the first time since 2000. *Parterre tickets from \$470, Met Opera, metopera.org*

11/12

SPACE's Farm in the City Gala

The third annual gala celebrates eight seasons of community at Ryder Farm. Proceeds from the event, hosted by actor Michael Chernus, go to the SPACE residency program, supporting numerous artists and innovators across disciplines. *Jubilee Sponsor \$25,000, 547 West 26th Street, Chelsea, spaceonryderfarm.org*

11/13

Night of Alchemy Benefit

A Blade of Grass' annual benefit helps to fund socially conscious art and foster community engagement and partnerships to enact social change. *Leader Table \$20,000, Riverside Church, abladeofgrass.org*

on the SCENE

BY CHRISTIAN DEVERGER

TOP ROCKS

Harry Winston hosted a glimmering set to show off its New York Collection.

- 1. The Rainbow Room got a dramatic, glitzy treatment.
- 2. Camila Coelho
- 3. Angela Sarafyan
- 4. Katie Holmes
- 5. Naomi Watts
- 6. Jennifer Hudson came out as the surprise musical guest.
- 7. 718 Emerald Vitrine necklace by Harry Winston



PHOTOS BY CARL THORP AND SARANTHA NANCYZWIA

THE PARTY Harry Winston lit up the Top of the Rock in the Rainbow Room with the unveiling of its New York Collection, a tribute to the city and its lasting influence on Winston's life and designs. Donning a selection of the new jewelry, stars and select VIPs enjoyed a night of celebration. **THE GUESTS** Those in attendance included **Naomi Watts**, sporting the Central Park Mosaic earrings; **Camila Coelho** in the brilliant emerald and diamond City Lights earrings; and **Angela Sarafyan**, wearing the City Lights earrings and bracelet with sapphires. **THE HIGHLIGHTS** The evening event closed with a dazzling performance by chanteuse **Jennifer Hudson**, who sparkled in a selection of iconic Winston pieces.

NOW IN NYC



BETTER WITH AGE

ROYAL CRUSH

It's not too much of an exaggeration to say that the creation of the current **Louis XIII** cognac (\$3,500, louisxiii-cognac.com) dates to 1874, when the blend was first conceived. There's no eau de vie in the current bottling quite that old, but this exquisite combination of finesse and power is the result of nothing if not long-term thinking (and the skills of the house's cellar masters). The current officiant, Baptiste Loiseau, took the reins in 2014 at the tender age of 34, and, like his four predecessors, he selects the finest barrels from previous decades for this, the house's pinnacle expression fit (ahem) for a king. "You have a lot of aromas: plums, figs," Loiseau said at a recent tasting. "And the concentration of time." —David Zivan



JUST SAY SPA

SWISS BLISS

Hôtel Plaza Athénée's Valmont Spa unveils a new alpine-inspired facial that is the very pinnacle of luxury.

By Maggie Meekhi // Photography by Jill Lotenberg

With water from Swiss glaciers collected at an altitude of more than 1.2 miles in the fresh mountain air, **Valmont** created a deluxe skincare line enriched by the benefits of glacial spring water. Hôtel Plaza Athénée, which houses the only Spa Valmont location in the country, is now offering elite facials using these resources. The new Summit of the Cervin facial launches in celebration of Valmont's new anti-aging skincare collection, AWF5. Named for one of Switzerland's highest summits, the facial utilizes the AWF5 products—along with the spa's trademark butterfly massage technique—to smooth and lift the skin to new heights. 60 minutes for \$300, 90 minutes for \$395, 37 E. 64th St., plaza-athenee.com

28

MANHATTAN NOVEMBER 2018 | MODERNLUXURY.COM

RETAIL RAP

COMING CLEAN

In an industry filled with chemically laden products, **Detox Market** is bringing green beauty to New York with a new flagship store. The "jewel box" building, designed by Suulin Architects, features two stories of white marble, ash wood fixtures and lush, plant-filled interiors, designed to complement a suite of eco-friendly products. "When we open a new store, we always focus all of our energy on creating a unique experience—a place where clients can ask questions, learn and challenge us while feeling at home," says founder and CEO Romain Gaillard. The space is equipped with a top floor dedicated to one-on-one consultations and private treatments. Meticulous product testing, which includes the maintenance of a comprehensive list of banned ingredients available for customer review, ensures that every line on the shelves—including a new in-house brand called Detox Mode—is an exemplar of wellness in beauty. 76 E. Houston St., thedetoxmarket.com —Christian DeVerger



Detox Mode Altogether Oil, \$32



FOOD & DRINK

Scallop crudo bursts from the plate at Hwaban in the Flatiron District.

GARDEN VARIETY

From edible flowers on scallop appetizers to cakes topped with petals of buttercream frosting, florals are key at Mihyun Han's new culinary creation. **Hwaban**, the latest restaurant from the Kosaka founder and her husband, Key Kim, captures the essence of the flower in each delicate dish. Inspired by Han's South Korean upbringing, the menu blends traditional with contemporary, leading to inventive twists on classics, such as sweet shrimp crudo salad with tomato sorbet, seaweed, pickled cucumber and Korean pear; and king crab with poached egg and spinach in pine nut sauce. Each dish is plated with deliberate sensibility, highlighting the natural beauty of ingredients with a focus on floral color. Hwaban also provides a group dining experience, a full-table affair with an array of dishes and soups. The communal table serves as an anchor for the 60-seat space, designed in collaboration with Super Paprika. Rotating floral arrangements and a blossoming light fixture embody the verdant theme, ensuring Hwaban lives up to a name meaning "as beautiful as a flower." 55 W. 19th St., hwaban.com

By Christian DeVerger // Photography by Kyle Graphys

FOOD & DRINK

which reportedly blew Oprah Winfrey away. 16 Bank St./Waverly Place, 917.828.1154, waverlyinn.com \$5

MEATPACKING DISTRICT/ CHELSEA

Barbuto 🍷 Jonathan Waxman's bustling Mediterranean bistro brings the freshest Italian-inspired plates to a stylish crowd that appreciates the venue's open-garage feel. The menu changes regularly, depending on the market: Homemade pastas, crisp salads and the signature wood-fired chicken are sure bets. 775 Washington St./W. 12th St., 212.924.9700, barbutonyc.com \$5

L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon "Chef of the Century" Joël Robuchon returns to New York City with L'Atelier, housed in the Meatpacking District. Taking inspiration from both the original L'Atelier opened in Paris in 2003 and his former Midtown restaurant, Robuchon's venture presents a charming mélange of

nostalgia and modern sensibility in both the decor and menu. The menu offers traditional bistro dishes such as beef tartare and foie gras, but don't miss the vegetarian tasting menu—the chef's favorite. 85 Tenth Ave./15th St., 212.488.8885, joelrobuchonusa.com \$\$\$\$

Rouge Tomato 🍷 The cuisine at Rouge Tomato starts with fresh seasonal ingredients combining health, sustainability and taste to accentuate the flavors in each dish. The Long Island duck breast is a winner, as it comes with white cabbage, beetroots, radish and natural jus. 126 W. 18th St./Sixth Ave., 646.395.3978, rougetomatochelea.com \$

Standard Grill The Standard Grill was all but a guaranteed success when it opened at The Standard Hotel in 2009. Thanks to the celeb status of hotelier André Balazs, beautiful people have flocked to this restaurant. Choose from a broad array of offerings like charred Spanish octopus and "million dollar" whole roast chicken for two.

848 Washington St./W. 13th St., 212.645.4100, thestandardgrill.com \$5

Untitled 🍷 With the Whitney Museum's move downtown, Danny Meyer and company have relocated to the airy Renzo Piano-designed building and are joined by Gramercy Tavern's chef, Michael Anthony. Find seasonal, locally grown ingredients in frequently changing dishes with an emphasis on vegetables. 99 Gansevoort St./Washington St., 212.570.3670, untitledatthewhitney.com \$5

GRAMERCY/ FLATIRON/ UNION SQUARE

Cote Dubbed New York City's first Korean steakhouse, Cote combines classic American steakhouse cuisine with Korean barbecue. Every piece of meat is USDA prime, meaning it comes from the top 5 percent of American cattle. For the full menu experience, try the Butcher's Feast, a selection of the chef's favorites including a

scallion salad and savory egg soufflé. 16 W. 22nd St./Fifth Ave., 212.401.7986, coteryc.com \$\$\$

Eleven Madison Park Every last detail of this gorgeously vaulted Madison Square Park outpost is sumptuous and swank, and the menu has opulence to match. Swiss-born, San Francisco-expat owner-chef Daniel Humm's French-inflected tasting menu focuses on local ingredients and offers innumerable delights. 11 Madison Ave./E. 24th St., 212.889.0905, elevenmadisonpark.com \$\$\$\$

Gotham Bar & Grill Alfred Portale's relentless pursuit of perfection—demonstrated by his constant tinkering with standards—has ensured him an enduring spot in the hearts of foodie loyalists citywide. Gotham's desserts, from pastry chef Ron Paprocki, are especially lauded. And it boasts the distinction of being the "only restaurant to have received five consecutive three-star reviews from *The New York Times*." 12 E. 12th St./

Fifth Ave., 212.620.4020, gubambaranagrill.com \$\$\$

MURRAY HILL/ KIPS BAY

Marta Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group and Mailino chef Nick Andeter's restaurant in The Redbury New York features thin-crust pizzas from a wood-burning oven and an open-fire grill, and Roman specialties. 29 E. 29th St./Madison Ave., 212.651.3800, martamanhattan.com \$5

Salvation Taco 🍷 April Bloomfield went beyond the gastropub fare that earned her Michelin stars to open Salvation Taco. The taqueria and cantina serves up a menu of reinterpreted Mexican favorites. 145 E. 39th St./Lexington and Third avenues, 212.865.5800, salvationtaco.com \$5

Scarpetta 🍷 Though the dining room can be a tough reservation to score, both the bar area and outdoor patio serve the same menu, featuring superb appetizers like ultrarich polenta with

FAHRENHEIT 800

A new high-heat pizzeria serves up more than traditional pies.

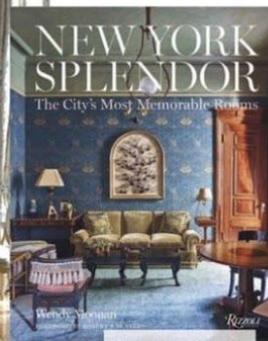
The newest location of Anthony Carron's Los Angeles-born eatery, **800 Degrees**, is raising Midtown's heat level as the eatery makes its NYC debut. The restaurant specializes in flame cooking and designed special stone hearth ovens and wood-fired rotisseries to impart smoky flavors to dishes cooked within. A menu managed by Mario Zeniou sources top-quality, local ingredients—vegetables from Long Island farms, Blue Ribbon wild tuna and Pat LaFrieda prime rib

and chicken—found in signature dishes, such as lunch-only power bowls, a Creckstone Farms prime rib and black tie pizza with Pata Negra iberico jamon, and black truffle burrata. The 135-seat space offers counter service during the day and transforms into an open kitchen at night. A full bar serves up a selection of cocktails, including Smoky LiberTea with apple- and cinnamon-infused bourbon, smoked maple syrup, ice tea and lemon; the Heat-Blast Margarita with Casa Noble tequila, Stones Ginger Wine, passion fruit, lime and jalapeno is sure to keep the temperature high. 1 E. 33rd St., 800degrees.com —Christian DeVerger



Salmon and patzrama pizza at 800 Degrees

PHOTO © SOPHIE ELGOUT



Clockwise from left: Robert Costurier Inc. designed a Louis XVI-style salon in Brooklyn; New York Splendor by Wendy Moonan; this library by Fairfax & Sammons is replete with polished maple bookcases and hundreds of works of art.

HALLOWED HALLS

In her latest book, Wendy Moonan opens a window into the most awe-inspiring rooms in New York.

By Christian DeVerger

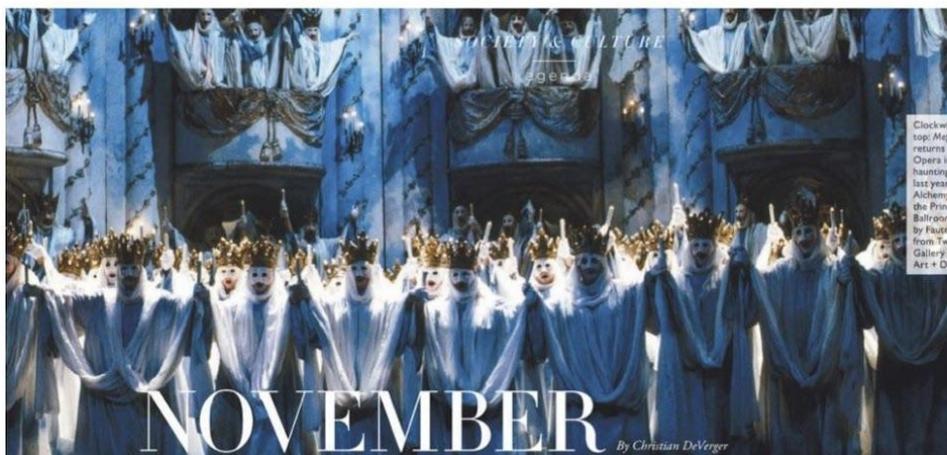
Architecture and design journalist Wendy Moonan certainly has an eye for elegance. In a career spanning three decades, she has explored every corner of the country in search of innovative designs and antiques. Her newest work, *New York Splendor: The City's Most Memorable Rooms* (\$85, Rizzoli), showcases the pinnacle of design, from some of the most talented names of the age, as a personal compendium of favorite private spaces in past and present New York.

A grand tour of luxury and taste, the book leads readers through myriad designs and styles, from opulent to austere. "My main criterion was simply that each

project have the 'wow' factor—rooms that elicited, from me, gasps of pleasure and admiration," Moonan says. "The rooms I have chosen are all about imagination; they invoke a sense of wonder."

New York Splendor is Moonan's personal response to this question: What makes a room magical? Each space contains the tangible evidence of her answer—the tented fabric that lines Alex Papachristidis' foyer, a soaring view of Manhattan from the Four Seasons' penthouse library, the collection of old master portraits that dot the walls of Adolfo F. Sardina's palatial duplex. Regardless of personal style or taste, Moonan's exhibition of residential spaces will leave a lasting impression long after the turn of the page.





Clockwise from top: Mefistofele returns to the Met Opera in all its haunting beauty; last year's Night of Alchemy benefit at the Prince George Ballroom; a chair by Faugel Maxou from Twenty First Gallery at the Salon Art + Design Fair.

11/1
The Met Real Estate Council Benefit
 Honoring Blackstone Senior Managing Director Frank Cohen, the 23rd annual benefit raises funds to support the museum's educational programs and features an exhibition viewing, alongside dinner and cocktails. *Chairman's Circle table \$100,000, The Met, metmuseum.org*

11/5
The New York Public Library Lions Gala
 In a night dedicated to the presentation of the institution's highest honor, five recipients will be celebrated for their cultural contributions at the highly anticipated annual event. *Legacy table \$150,000, The New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, nypl.org*

11/8-15
DOC NYC
 The largest documentary film festival in America, DOC NYC is a weeklong celebration of the diverse genre across three theaters. *All-access pass \$999, IFC Center, SVA Theatre, Cinepolis Chelsea, docnyc.net*

Proceeds from the event, hosted by actor Michael Chernus, go to the SPACE residency program, supporting numerous artists and innovators across disciplines. *Jubilee Sponsor \$25,000, 547 W. 26th St., spaceonyderfarm.org*

2

11/2
The Sound of Stone
 Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevoik Mourad illustrates Armenian history with his own works alongside a composition from esteemed Armenian composer and pianist Vache Sharafyan. *Tickets from \$50, The Met, metmuseum.org*

11/8-12
Salon Art + Design Fair
 Showcasing historical, modern and contemporary furniture alongside groundbreaking design and art, the seventh edition of the prestigious design fair returns to New York. *First look preview tickets \$250, Park Avenue Armory, thesalonny.com*

11/8-12/1
Mefistofele
 Featuring Christian Van Horn, Michael Fabiano and Angela Meade, Arrigo Boito's only completed opera returns to the Met Opera for the first time since 2000. *Parterre tickets from \$135, Met Opera, metopera.org*



12

11/12
SPACE's Farm in the City Gala
 The third annual gala celebrates eight seasons of community at Ryder Farm.

11/13
Night of Alchemy Benefit
 A Blade of Grass' annual benefit helps to fund socially conscious art and foster community engagement and partnerships to enact social change. *Leader table \$20,000, Riverside Church, abladeofgrass.org*



DECEMBER

Note: Articles for december will not have published pages until the edition comes out. At the time of writing, November is the most recent issue that has been published.

MANH_Dec_Now_Equinox

Head: Burning Brighter

Dek: Two new products born out of a collaboration between Equinox and UMA focus on self-care and relaxation.

As the days grow short and holiday shopping lists grow longer, staying energized after a workout can be a challenge. Enter Equinox's newest collaboration with Uma Oils. The fitness club is teaming up to create a limited-edition candle and a collection of all-organic wellness oils to promote balance and regeneration. Designed to turn any space into a sanctum of mindful relaxation, The Pure Recovery Wellness Candle (\$68) features a blend of eucalyptus, sandalwood and lavender. For a more hands-on approach, the Pure Recovery signature Equinox blend collection of wellness oils (\$48) is intended for post-workout application to the body's pulse points. The oils immerse the user in an aromatherapeutic experience that resets the mind and restores the body. The collection features five distinct, all-organic varieties—Calm, Energy, Bliss, Rest and the Equinox exclusive Recovery. With this suite that aids everything from anxiety to nighttime restlessness, holiday stress can evaporate away. *1 Park Ave., umaoils.com*
—*Christian DeVerger*

MANH_Dec_Guide_Sans

Hed: Nothing Missing

Dek: The former Nightingale Nine location will play host to chef Champ Jones' new vegan restaurant, focused on rich, hearty dishes and sustainable drinks.

Chef Champ Jones isn't just creating a vegan restaurant that serves great food—he's establishing a culture to prove that a meat-free menu can indulge every eater, regardless of dining proclivities. Jones' first solo restaurant after a four-year stint as the sous chef at NoMad and Eleven Madison Park, Sans, is located in the former Seersucker and Nightingale Nine location in Carroll Gardens, and the intimate 30-seat restaurant features a plant-based menu rife with innovative vegan dishes, served alongside a sustainable drink program. Think Tarte Flambe with maitake and dairyless parmesan cream spiked with brewers yeast, or the TV Dinner, a vegan take on meatloaf, served with hearty potatoes peas and carrots. Collaborating with acclaimed sommelier Daniel Beedle, Sans' beverage offerings focus on minimizing waste by repurposing

other menu ingredients. An in-house shrub and bitters operation utilizes leftover spices and herbs from the kitchen, and unused wines are made into a homemade grenadine. Leftover limes, lemons and mint are frozen and made into flavored ingredients, and cocktails such as One More—a fruity daiquiri with peach and mint—uses rum infused with recycled pineapple skins. For the most in-depth dining experience, a five course tasting menu is also available, guaranteeing every diner, vegan or not, leave more than appeased. *329 Smith St., Brooklyn, sansbk.com –Christian DeVerger*

MANH_Dec_Now_Plumguide

Hed: Walls that talk

Dek: Teaming up Design Milk founder Jaime Derringer, The Plum Guide’s new series of audio tours melds art tour and vacation home.

A voice explains the detail of each work as

Wandering through gallery-like rooms, visitors are guided by a voice explaining the detail of each artwork, the significance of the architecture, the history behind the space, but this isn’t a museum—it’s a vacation home. The Plum Guide, a service that curates, tests and certifies the best privately owned vacation properties across the market, is now offering audio tours through four historic rentals around the globe. Developed in conjunction with Design Milk founder Jaime Derringer, The Plum Stories podcasts serve as guides through the history and art of these exceptional estates. Four locations across the world act as a guests’ personal museum, including a music-history-filled Greenwich loft featuring abstract expressionist pieces from Ronaldo De Juan and Budd Hopkins, both of which were painted in the space. Other locations include a Los Angeles home once owned by master horror director James Whale, a Milan apartment showcasing a number of Italy’s upcoming artists and an exclusive Roman villa with details available to listeners.

rentals. plumguide.com –Christian DeVerger

MANH_Dec_Now_Fithouse

Hed: Class in Session

Dek: Fithouse expands to two new locations in Tribeca and Union Square.

No longer do workout enthusiasts have to bend their schedule around fitness classes. At the newest location of Fithouse, located in Tribeca, the boutique club aims to serve as a one-stop

exercise destination, providing instructor-led classes of all sorts, from dance-based cardio to sculpting yoga, at flexible hours throughout the day. Membership includes unlimited access to the full class suite, led by a number of high-quality trainers. The new Tribeca studio is 4,400 square feet of fitness-focused interiors with a high-quality sound system, locker rooms stocked with premium products, self check-in and customizable lighting. Opening in January is Fithouse's Union Square location that will include hot yoga and pilates just in time heat up during the cold winter days. *Memberships from \$189 per month, 93 Worth St., fit-house.com, –Christian DeVerger*

JANUARY

MANH_Jan_IconIndex_MoMA

Hed: MoMA

Dek: For 80 years, the Museum of Modern Art has redefined perceptions of art and how it is exhibited, challenging the status quo and engaging visitors with its in-depth programming and global initiatives. With a new, expanded space opening on the horizon, we celebrate the milestone anniversary of a cultural monument, by the numbers. *–Christian DeVerger*

1929 - Year that three influential patrons of the arts, Lillie P. Bliss, Cornelius J. Sullivan and Abigail Greene Rockefeller Jr., came together with founding director Alfred H. Barr to found MoMA.

35 - Number of languages in which MoMA has published editions. (going to ask what editions actually means)

47,293 - Number of guests who attended the MoMA in the first month of its opening

3 - Number of stars *The New York Times* gave The Modern in its review. Debuting in 2005, the award-winning restaurant, overlooking the Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, is a showcase of chef Abram Bissell's superb, seasonal cuisine.

200,000 - Number of artworks housed at MoMA today

30 - Percent increased exhibition space with the opening of the new MoMA building. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Gensler, the renovations add 50,000 square feet to the western portion of the building, along with expansions all throughout the existing space.

175,000 square feet - The total size of gallery space at MoMA

26,207 - Number of individual artists showcased at MoMA

3 million - Number of guests who visited MoMA last year

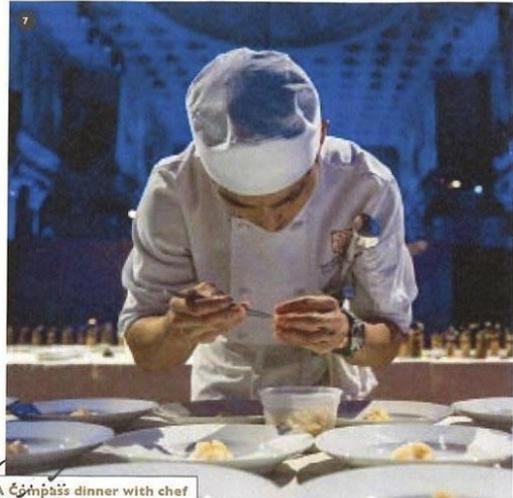
Quote: “The Museum of Modern Art’s renovation and expansion project will seek to reassure and surprise.” –Glenn D. Lowry

Christian

SOCIAL SCENE

[SNAPSHOTS]

Asia Society's Season of India Gala
1) Vishal Khosla and Tashi Sarhan
2) Piyari Doshi and Nauman Piyari attended to celebrate the opening of the Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India exhibit.



BBVA Compass dinner with chef Joan Roca and culinary students
7) Jeffrey Kim

Allergan launched Spotify to digital content venture
3) Tablescape at The Whitby Hotel
4) Kara Medoff Barnett, Alexis Maybank and event host Alexandra Wilkis Wilson
5) Morgan McKee and Babi Wuluwala
6) Brent Saunders and Christina Minnis



“We have a unique position as industry leaders to identify emerging trends in real time.”
-Alexandra Wilkis Wilson, SVP of consumer strategy and innovation at Allergan

BBVA PHOTO BY ABIELE FIGUEROA; ALLEGAN PHOTOS BY HANIC PATRICKOBERA.COM



STYLE & BEAUTY
shops

From left: RH CEO and Chairman Gary Friedman; the first floor living room at the new RH location.

SETTING STORE

With a massive shopping destination debuted, RH's Gary Friedman opens up about the brand and its new neighborhood.

By Kendyl Kearly

MANHATTAN NOVEMBER 2016 | MODERNLUXURY.COM

Christian DeLuca



With a rooftop park, barista bar, restaurant, wine terrace and 90,000 square feet of home shopping, RH's new, six-story outpost at the corner of West 12th and 9th is quickly becoming one of the most overwhelmingly luxurious stores in the city. A collaboration between RH Chairman and CEO Gary Friedman and design architect James Gilliam, the store includes goods from the RH Interiors, RH Modern, RH Baby & Child, RH TEEN and RH Outdoor collections artfully arranged in the kind of opulent, contemporary interiors for which RH is known. We checked in with Friedman on how this monolithic structure came to be and its impact on RH's legacy.

You have opened RH galleries all over the country—why New York and why now? New York is our biggest market and the bridge to Europe. There is no other city more important to our brand and business. Our vision for RH New York was to create the most innovative retail experience in the world in the most important city in the world.

What drew you to the Meatpacking District? We liked the irreverence and soul of the Meatpacking District. At its core, it's a neighborhood of originals and leaders: Florent, Pastis, the first Soho House outside of London, Jeffrey, Diane V's modern steel and glass rooftop penthouse, the first Stella McCartney store, the High Line, the Standard, the new Whitney by Renzo Piano, etc.

What do you love most about the space? So many things. The adapted reuse of the original brick facade that Jim Gilliam designed is so original yet ties perfectly to the history, spirit and soul of the historic Meatpacking District and the elevated trains. The central atrium beautifully ties together all the floors and floods the center with natural light. The cast iron columns are a perfect reference to the past, and many who have seen it think the atrium was always here. The rooftop restaurant and park take your breath away. The structure, simplicity and discipline of the landscaping is unlike anything in the city. It is hands-down my favorite rooftop in the world.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM HANSON FOR RH

Christian DeVege

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SOCIETY & CULTURE



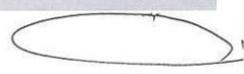
HEART OF STONE

From Cleopatra's cobra headdress to Holly Golightly's diamond tiara, jewelry has always served as a way to chronicle a society's views of style and wealth. This month, in *Jewelry: The Body Transformed*, The Met unveils a cache of glittering jewels that span across centuries and hemispheres in origin. The museum curated approximately 250 objects including brooches, necklaces, rings, ear ornaments, belts and head pieces to be displayed alongside complementary sculptures, paintings, prints and photographs. One such adornment is pair of gold earrings attributed to Greece ca. 330–300 B.C. (tell the salacious myth of Ganymede and the eagle. Some 5,000 years later, René-Jules Lalique made a name for himself in turn-of-the-century France by crafting exquisite baubles of opal, amethyst and gold. No matter how dissimilar they appear in style and material, these gems all share a similar story of meticulous craftsmanship and cultural beauty.

Nov. 12 to Feb. 24, 2019, 1000 Fifth Ave.,
metmuseum.org – Kendyl Kearly

René-Jules Lalique (ca. 1897–99, gold, opal, amethyst, 9 1/2 inches)

PHOTO BY ELLEN ANNA-FARE, COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF LILLIAN HASSAUI, 1985



Christina Delbos

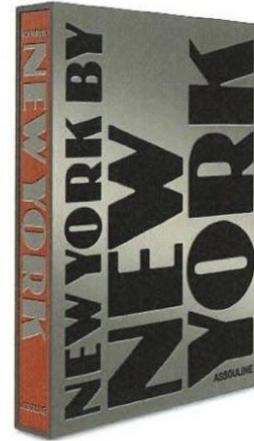


Same thing?
From top: Mimi So at her new Lower East Side store; 18K yellow gold green and blue sapphire ring with diamonds, \$5,100, and 18K yellow gold green and blue sapphire ring with diamonds, \$5,400

SO WONDERFUL



Vibrant colors, woodland creatures, diamond bows and handmade birdhouses that double as jewelry displays embody the essence of **Mimi So**, who brings her eponymous brand's colorful personality to a new location. The third-generation jeweler and first female designer to join the CFDA celebrated 20 years in business by opening a store in the Lower East Side. So custom-built every element of the new boutique, decorated it with reclaimed wood from upstate, collaborated with design studio Tri-Lox and furniture company BDDW and displayed her signature "Piece" symbol in the store's top window. "The idea was to step into my fantasy wonderland where magical beauty lives," says So, who grew up in the area. "I wanted customers to feel the joy of trying on our handmade, carved opal bunny rings, diamond twigs necklaces, ruby ladybugs and buzzing tassel bumble bee earrings." 21 Crosby St., mimiso.com —Maggie Meskhi



PAGE TURNER

Street Smarts

The endless list of love letters dedicated to New York City—from poems and novels to songs and movies—is about to include a luxury book. This month, **Assouline** releases *New York by New York* (\$250, Assouline), a tome filled with photos and quotes that pay homage to the history of the city, from the Harlem Renaissance and the speakeasies of the Jazz Age up to the present day. Featuring a foreword by novelist Jay McInerney, the book will cover all five boroughs to make the reader to feel as if he or she is traveling through the most important periods of New York through the eyes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, Audrey Hepburn, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Madonna. The 360 pages of images by epochal photographers including Edward Steichen and Peter Lindbergh are paired with texts and quotes from the likes of Edith Wharton, Tom Wolfe and E.B. White for an ultimate love story or, as co-founder of Assouline Publishing Martine Assouline describes it, "a tribute to the New York I love." —MM *little*

STYLING BY BRITANNY AMBERIDGE. COURTESY OF MIMI SO

Christian Pellegrini



-LOW RES
-DARKEN
BEHIND
HEK/DEK

DR. FEEL GOOD

These top docs are making the world a more beautiful place, one altruistic act at a time.

By Phebe Wahl

white on white on pink photos

one?



DR. ANDREW JACONO
THE HEALER

Renowned, dual board-certified facial plastic surgeon Dr. Jacono (newyorkfacialplasticsurgery.com) might be celebrated for his flawless face lifts—but in addition to his aesthetic work—he serves as the Senior Advisor to FACE TO FACE, a national project offering pro-bono consultation and plastic surgery to victims of domestic violence. Jacono also serves as the surgical team leader for Healing the Children, which helps international children with limited medical and financial resources receive surgeries including cleft lip and palate reconstruction.



DR. MELISSA LEVIN
THE VOICE

Entière Dermatology (entierederm.com) founder Dr. Melissa Levin, M.D. is known for her love of crafting holistic and bespoke cosmetic solutions but also for her passion for philanthropy. The Tribeca-based board-certified dermatologist works with Standing Voice (standingvoice.org)—the Tanzania-based NGO that works to empower marginalized groups like those with albinism who suffer severe discrimination and violence across areas in Africa.



DR. PAUL JARROD FRANK
THE HERO

"When I first went into practice, I got involved in a philanthropic group through my professional society of dermatological surgeons that helped women and children scarred from physical abuse," says Frankmd (pfrankmdskinsalon.com) founder Dr. Frank. "I met many members of both the police force and subsequently, the armed forces who also suffered through professional trauma. Years later, I received my FBA State Trooper Surgeon Badge to use my professional services to help those who courageously risk their lives to protect and serve us."



DR. DENDY ENGELMAN
THE HEART

"I've been to Haiti seven times volunteering in the medical space and Kenya once," says board certified dermatologic surgeon Dr. Engelman (drdendyengelman.com). The altruistic doctor known for treating some of the city's most luminous faces was awarded the Humanism in Medicine Scholarship for establishing and running a free medical care clinic in Charleston and in Haiti while a mere medical student and continues her heartfelt work in Haiti today.

his kind drops medical students. Maybe while still a med student.

5800
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FEAST
guide

northward, the food's exactly as good as you recall from the original. PRO TIP Head upstairs to the six-seat bar, made with wood reclaimed from the bar in the restaurant's original location. 101 E. 19th St., 212.243.4020. unionsquarecafe.com \$\$\$

MURRAY HILL/
KIPS BAY

Marta (Danny) Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group and Malialino chef Nick Andriotti's restaurant in The Redbury New York features thin-crust pizzas from a wood-burning oven and an open-fire grill, and Bohian specialties. 29 E. 29th St./Madison Ave., 212.651.3800. mariamanhutton.com \$\$

Salvation Taco & April

Bloomfield went beyond the gastropub fare that earned her Michelin stars to open Salvation Taco with her partner, Ken Friedman. The taqueria and cantina serves up a menu of reinterpreted Mexican favorites. 145 E. 39th St./Lexington and Third avenues, 212.865.5800. salvationtaco.com \$\$

Scarpetta

Though the dining room can be a tough reservation to score, both the bar area and outdoor patio serve the same menu, featuring superb appetizers like ultrarich polenta with truffled mushrooms and seared diver scallops. Pastas (duck and foie gras ravioli) are superb and the service is good. 355 W. 14th St./Hudson Ave., 212.691.0555. scarpettarestaurants.com \$\$

MIDTOWN EAST

'21' Club Opened on New Year's Day in 1930.

this one-time speak-easy (complete with secret wine cellar) has long been a favorite of politicians like Govs. Mario and Andrew Cuomo; Mayors Ed Koch, Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg; and former Presidents Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon. When there, go for the Dover sole, a signature dish prepared by executive chef Sylvain Delpique, and stay for the people-watching. 21 W. 52nd St./Fifth Ave., 212.582.7200. 21club.com \$\$\$\$

Agern

Nestled near Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall, Agern is the creation of Claus Meyer, co-founder of Copenhagen's Noma restaurant. The restaurant uses its modern Nordic menu to highlight the finest farmed and wild ingredients from New York. 89 E. 42nd St./Park Ave., 646.568.4018. agernrestaurant.com \$\$\$\$

Ai Fiori

Ai Fiori is giving chef Michael White, with his delectable pastas and succulent seafood, an ideal showcase for his talents. Taking inspiration from Italy and France, White's dinner menus stars lobster soup with périgord black truffles and tarragon. Follow it with blue crab spaghetti or duck breast with onion mustard, chicories and blackberries. 400 Fifth Ave./37th St., 212.613.8600. aiforinyc.com \$\$\$

Casa Lever

Backed by Giancarlo Giarocci and Dimitri Pauli, the minds (and money) behind Sant' Ambroëus, Casa Lever features original Andy Warhol paintings that look down on patrons

enjoying Milne-style crudos, risottos, pastas, meats and whole grilled fish. The place, which evokes the late 1960s and early 1970s, has attracted the likes of Alec Baldwin, Jon Hamm and Chris Rock. 300 Park Ave./53rd St., 212.888.2700. casalerver.com \$\$\$\$

Davio's

The Northern Italian steakhouse permits a menu with a wide range of items varying from crusted New York sirloins to Atlantic salmon. Start the evening off in the trendy, exciting lounge sampling from the extensive cocktail list before moving to the elegant yet inviting dining room for signature dishes such as lobster tail or tagliatelle in a braised veal, beef, pork and tomato sauce. 447 Lexington Ave./E. 44th St., 212.661.4810. davios.com \$\$\$

La Grenouille

Even more precious now that La Cote Basque, Lutèce and La Caravelle, those vestiges of fine French dining, are but memories, La Grenouille is a place every Manhattanite needs to experience at least once. In this era of fusion cuisine, there's something comforting about steak tartare and ravioli served by a waiter who's not pursuing an acting career. 3 E. 52nd St./Fifth Ave., 212.752.1495. lagrenouille.com \$\$\$\$

The Grill

In this sculptural dining room, chef Mario Carbone serves time-honored dishes such as Pheasant Glabonne with Madeira, black truffle and endive and the even more traditional filet mignon. Other classics such as whipped potatoes, grilled

broccoli and Carolina pilaf travel through this historical restaurant on trolleys. 99 E. 52nd St./Park Ave., 212.375.9001. thegrillnewyork.com \$\$\$\$

The Lobster Club

At this Peter Marino-designed brasserie, guests can enjoy yellowtail poke, whole branzino and a variety of house rolls by Michelin-starred chef Tasuku Murakami. PRO TIP All menu items are intended to be shared, so order a variety of dishes to taste as much as possible. 98 E. 53rd St./Park Ave., 212.375.9001. thelobsterclub.com \$\$\$

Michael's

Apart from the food, what keeps media VIPs like Barbara Walters and Charlie Rose coming back is the trademark welcome of Michael McCarty, who opened the place in 1989. For the best view of the action, secure a table in the front room (though it may take more than a few visits to land such favored treatment). 24 W. 55th St./Fifth Ave., 212.767.0555. michaelsnewyork.com \$\$\$

Monkey Bar

Expect plenty of monkey business at this famed New York eatery, which was bought by former Vanity Fair editor Graydon Carter and partners. Opened during the Great Depression, the bar is located in the Hotel Ellysée, haunt of bygone boldface names Tallulah Bankhead and Tennessee Williams. These days, Monkey Bar capitalizes on its midcentury glory with a clubby feel and a comprehensive menu. 60 E. 54th St./Madison Ave., 212.288.1010. monkeybarnewyork.com \$\$

The Pool In the Four Seasons' former home, The Pool features an ocean-focused menu, serving raw, cooked and whole seafood. Be sure to ask about the kitchen's daily selection of prime dry-aged steaks. For a more casual experience, travel upstairs to The Pool Loftage to sample caviar and cocktails by famous bartender Thomas Waugh. 99 E. 52nd St./Park Ave., 212.375.9001. thepoolnewyork.com \$\$\$\$

Zuma

Food visionary Rainer Becker offers a wide range of contemporary Japanese cuisine. Quality ingredients are put into the dishes to exemplify bold, intense flavors. Standout signature dishes include the kinoko ho kama meshi (a rice hot pot with wild mushrooms and Japanese vegetables) and the rikyū no datkon ponzu funi (chicken steak with Wafu sauce and garlic chips). 261 Madison Ave./E. 38th St., 212.544.9862. zumarestaurant.com \$\$\$

MIDTOWN WEST

The Aviary NYC

On the top floor of the Mandarin Oriental hotel, The Aviary offers innovative cocktails and panoramic views of Central Park. Make sure to try the Wake and Bake, a whiskey-based cocktail with coffee and orange juice, served in an everything bagel-scented pillow (yep, you read that right!). 80 Columbus Circle/60th St., 212.805.8800. aviarynyc.com \$\$\$

Le Bernardin

Considered by most the ne plus ultra of French fine dining in New York, Eric Ripert's elegant Midtown seafood shrine offers a level

no longer open after 5PM MS could be a night

88 Madison Avenue

one word
Ap says
rib-eye

Set

Christian D. Vega

of perfection in the city's cuisine scene. His delicate, meticulously crafted culinary works of art show hints of genius; the service is balletic; and sommelier Aldo Sahn happens to be the best in the world (just ask him). 155 W. 51st St./Seventh Ave., 212.554.1515, le-bernaudin.com \$\$\$\$

Bond & Bond After moving from 45th Street's historic Bond Clothing Store, this local favorite opened in the Theater District and serves all-day breakfast, lunch and dinner. The expansive menu presents classic Italian dishes such as handcrafted Brando's lasagna and veal Milanese alongside American fare such as roasted chicken and Bond's Cheeseburger. Be sure to try the famed vegetable antipasto bar. 211 W. 46th St./Eighth Ave., 212.889.4345, bond5ny.com \$\$

DaDong The first American outpost of this popular Chinese restaurant was designed by George Wong and boasts more than 440 seats over a sprawling space on two floors. Chef Dong Zhenzhong, who counts Michelle Obama and royalty as loyal guests, has perfected Peking duck and pulls together an artistic Chinese feast. 3 Bryant Park/Sixth Ave., 212.355.9600, dadongny.com \$\$\$\$

Estiatorio Milos Seafood doesn't get much fresher than this. Select your fish from the Milos Market, and it will be sent to the kitchen and prepared to your specifications. Paying by the pound, you might experience a bit of sticker shock when

the bill arrives, so if you want to keep the tab manageable, take care that your eyes aren't bigger than your wallet. 125 W. 55th St./Sixth Ave., 212.245.7400, milos.co \$\$\$\$

Kingside Enter the Viceroy for a menu designed by chef Fernando Navas that includes bigeye tuna carpaccio, scallops crudo, and ricotta cavatelli with truffle butter, beech mushrooms and a poached egg. 124 W. 57th St./Sixth and Seventh avenues, 212.707.8000, kingside-restaurant.com \$\$\$

Marea This Southern Italian restaurant by Michael White modernizes old-world favorites such as strozzapreti with jumbo lump crab, sea urchin and basil; and the brodetto di pesce, a delectable seafood soup with clams, langoustine, scallops, prawns and bass. 240 Central Park S./Eighth Ave., 212.582.5100, marea-ny.com \$\$\$\$

UPPER EAST SIDE

Lexington Club Surf meets turf at Laurent Tourondel and Tao Group's steakhouse, formerly known as Arlington Club, but not in the traditional manner; French technique is imbued in a menu of which grilled octopus can be ordered with the classic porterhouse. 1032 Lexington Ave./E. 74th St., 212.249.5700, thelexingtonclubny.com \$\$\$\$

Avra Madison Estiatorio With two locations, this authentic Greek restaurant puts an emphasis on fresh seafood and Mediterranean dishes.

With a raw bar of clams and oysters, sashimi items and fresh-caught whole fish by the pound char-grilled to perfection, there is something for all fish lovers. The classic Greek salad and vegetable sides round out the menu to pair with the main courses. 14 E. 60th St./Madison Ave., 212.937.0100, avra.com \$\$

Café Americaino Anthony and Tom Martignetti, owners of The East Pole, Pizza Beach and Eastfield's, have done it again with Café Americaino. Open all day for breakfast, lunch and dinner, the farm-to-table menus serve up something for everyone. Enjoy the smoked salmon tartine for breakfast; an array of panini for lunch, like the prosciutto, fresh mozzarella and apple; and for dinner, a grass-fed double cheeseburger or a veggie- and grain-packed macro bowl. 964 Lexington Ave./E. 70th St., 212.698.4948, caferamericano.com \$26-76

Café Boulud Communal tables and rich wood paneling set the scene here. Choose from a menu offering fontina ravioli with cauliflower and brown butter almond gremolata; and yellowfish tuna with spinach, gomas, mushrooms and sesame seeds. It's less formal than Boulud's haute cuisine temple, Daniel, but still a treat savored by those like John Kerry and Teresa Heinz. 20 E. 76th St./Fifth Ave., 212.772.2600, cafeboulud.com/nyc \$\$\$

Charc A modern iteration of the traditional European wine bar, Michelin-starred chef Danny Brown's casual 25-seat restaurant and bar

proposes a menu filled with artisanal and local cheeses, seasonal ingredients and a selection of wines ranging from Germany to South Africa. Charc also boasts a full cocktail selection, spirits, a beer menu and brunch. 316 E. 84th St./Second Ave., 646.719.1398, charcny.com \$\$

Daniel The notoriously exacting Daniel Boulud won honors with his seasonal, contemporary French tasting menu. From the moment you pass through its revolving-door entrance, you're transported into a culinary haven where the service and food are unparalleled. 60 E. 65th St./Madison Ave., 212.288.0033, danielnyc.com \$\$\$\$

Flora Bar The chic, dramatic space on the ground floor of The Met Brueer comes from the team behind his restaurant Estela. The menu here is mostly seafood-based small plates—think shrimp with sea urchin and nori. The wine list has plenty to please even the most discerning oenophile. PRO TIP Don't miss the tuna tartare—it's quickly becoming known as the city's best. 945 Madison Ave., 646.358.5383, florabary.com \$\$\$\$

Jojo Jojo reopened its doors in a modern duplex town house on the Upper East Side. The restaurant, titled after head chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's childhood nickname, features a farm-to-table French menu including wagyu beef tenderloin and marinated charred duck breast with berry-port compote, glazed baby turnips and lemon verbena.

160 E. 64th St./Lexington Ave., 212.223.5056, jojorestaurantnyc.com \$\$\$\$

Majorelle Elegance reigns at Majorelle, the long-awaited French-Moroccan spot in The Lowell hotel. It's overseen by Charles Masson, the longtime GM at La Grenouille, who's brought his magic touch with flowers to infuse the room with a superbly romantic feel. PRO TIP Take your nightcap in the Club Room, a sofa-strewn space open only to hotel guests during the day. 28 E. 63rd St., 212.955.2888, lowellhotel.com \$\$\$\$

Sant Ambroeus This Upper East Side version of a restaurant by the same name in Milan is a charming neighborhood spot favored by the likes of art gallerist Larry Gagosian. Sant Ambroeus serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, which means you can order griddle pancakes with blueberry compote, sugar-coated apples and fresh fruit, and later dine on linguine with clams, fresh parsley and spicy cherry tomatoes. 1000 Madison Ave./E. 79th St., 212.570.2211, santambroeus.com \$\$\$

Tavern62 Partnered with ESquared Hospitality, chef David Burke's newest concept features modern American plates as a nod to New York classics. Burke's contemporary approach to cooking can be seen in all of his dishes, like the spicy salami flatbread, red snapper (paella style with chorizo, shrimp, clams, mussels and saffron risotto), and his Peking pork shank with shrimp and lap chong fried rice.

Thank you for the menu!
 hot on menu swap

temporarily closed not on the partnered site of ESquared

Christian Beller

ICON INDEX

Diane von Furstenberg & Barry Diller

Whether it was her groundbreaking wrap dress or her many other fashion ventures, Diane von Furstenberg always makes an impact. Along with her husband Barry Diller, von Furstenberg continues to make a legacy through a lifelong love of philanthropy. In light of the couple's historic donation to a new park on the Hudson, we celebrate their increasing philanthropist efforts by the numbers. —Kai Burkhardt

\$250 MILLION

Estimated cost of the 2.7-acre park being built on Pier 55. Diller and von Furstenberg donated \$130 million to the park that will "float" above the Hudson.

NY1

can't confirm

2015

Year von Furstenberg was named one of *Time's* 100 Most Influential People for both her advancements in fashion and philanthropy.

1999

Year the Diller Von Furstenberg Foundation was created.

Dvff.org

1.45 miles

Length of New York City's High Line, to which the Diller Von Furstenberg Foundation contributed \$20 million.

Hydralpress.com

Nytimes.com

26,000 square feet

The size of the future Statue of Liberty Museum. Diane von Furstenberg was named chair of the fundraising campaign after donating to the museum.

abc7ny.com



5

Number of women honored yearly by the DVF awards, which acknowledge women who extraordinarily motivate other women.

DVF.com

2019

A big year for the couple. Many of their investments are planned including the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, a multi-arts center named the Shed and the Statue of Liberty Museum.

word?

libertyellisfoundation.org

theshed.org

academymuseum.com

The two made the largest donation to a public park in New York City's history: \$130 million to the upcoming park on Pier 55.

more than \$100 MILLION

Amount of money given in grants to nonprofits through the Diller Von Furstenberg Foundation.

lc

"In all circumstances, I always look for the light and build around it, with little memory of pain."
—Diane von Furstenberg, *Diane: A Signature Life: My Adventures in Fashion, Business, and Life*

eighty two

Number of grantees of the Diller Von Furstenberg Foundation

June 19, 2015

The date Diller and von Furstenberg signed the Giving Pledge promising to give more than half of their wealth to philanthropic efforts.

PHOTO BY ION GALELLI/WIREIMAGEGETTY IMAGES

Givingpledge.org

LETTER from THE EDITOR



ADVENTURE AWAITS

As the colors of fall explode all around us, winter's frost will soon drive us indoors. From the Berkshires and Rockefeller camp upstate to a castle in Ireland, we offer escapes near and far. Speaking of adventures, don't miss our annual restaurant feature where we buzz all you need to know for your own epicurean endeavors right here at home. Here, our fall favorites from the issue.

Rockefeller

Phebe Callaway Wahl
Editor-in-Chief

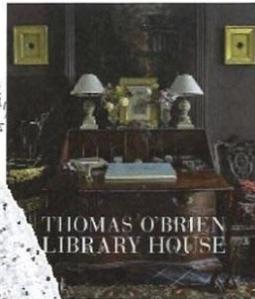
pwahl@modernluxury.com
Instagram: @manhattan_magazine; @phebewahl



"Researching this issue's beauty story on scalp health helped me understand the root of healthy hair." Extreme caviar exfoliating scrub scalp mask, \$50, miriamquevedo.com

"Profiling the Blumenthals for our Broad page was so much fun. With Warby Parker and Rocketts of Awesome plus two children—they are quite the power pair!" Silver bomber jacket, \$50, rocketts4awesome.com

let
can't call
not member



"I have had the pleasure of shooting Thomas O'Brien's Bellport home for the magazine and I will be curling up with his latest book this season." Library House by Thomas O'Brien (\$60, Abrams Books)

"Adaptogens help regulate the stress of the season. Loaded with C80, these delicious treats help me turn off at the end of the day." Lord Jones + Sigus-Ros High CBD limited-edition all-natural signberry gumdrops, \$60, lordjones.com



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANGELA HOBBS

Christian DeVey

DESIGN & REALTY
designer picks



"The light fixture is elegant enough for a foyer of a residence or, if layered in multiple pieces, can be perfect for lobby of a hotel. I love the elegant casual feeling of this fixture, a true reflection of the current trends in interior architecture and design." *Dinah Light, \$1,650, leebrookusa.com*



"This custom carpet by FCD Studios captures how one can create dimension mixing silk and wool." *Custom carpet in silk and wool, price upon request, Functional Creative Design, 170 E. 25th St.*

SUITE ESCAPE

Functional Creative Design's Sarah A. Abdallah has decorated for some of the most impressive hotels in the world: the Soho Grand, The Ritz-Carlton and the Park Hyatt, to name a few. Here, she names her sumptuous picks for mixing textures, whether in the townhouse or penthouse.

By Kendyl Kearly



"This is truly a unique sculpture and a great work of art. The texture and scale makes this piece special, and no two pieces are the same." *Vase by \$1,270 by Büchler at Liaigre, 102 Madison Ave.*

can't
is better



"This is a fantastic chair for a reading nook or statement piece for a hotel lobby lounge. It's super luxe and comfortable but also works as a sculpture statement on its own." *High chair \$1,399 by Felia Novak, dcrnc.com*

no
pelle
I liked
a dlcyo



"Apparatus Studio did an amazing job of modernizing this piece—I'm attracted to the deconstructed way of using the marble that veers away from the traditional take on marble coffee table motif, \$11,400, apparatusstudio.com

PHOTOGRAPH BY BALL & ALANISE LLC



DESIGN & REALTY
on the market

Mod Squad? GLAMOROUS SPIRIT

Uptown meets downtown at this chic, Jonathan Adler-designed model residence in one of Manhattan's hottest neighborhoods.

By Wendy Bowman // Photography by Gieves Anderson

When Extell Development Co. called on noted New York-based potter, designer and author Jonathan Adler to stage model unit 17E at its 70 Charlton condo building, they knew he was the perfect choice to infuse a touch of downtown style into the amenity-rich residence, all while embodying the charm of the surrounding Hudson Square neighborhood. The result was a one-of-a-kind dream home with the chic, luxury polish of something that might be found on the Upper East Side but with an edge to match its trendy locale.

Now on the market for \$5.4 million, the condo offers 2,000-plus square feet of living space boasting an artfully curated mix of Adler's own furnishings, bold strikes of color and playful details throughout. Among the highlights: a gold-and-white living room clad in textured blue wallpaper, replete with a Reform Credenza in hand-hammered brass and oak, large Gold Sunburst Hand-Knotted Rug and Claridge Sofa in blue velvet; along with a

dining room sporting a Trocadero Table and white-linen Maximie Chairs, Caracas Six-Light Chandelier, and cluster of black-and-white ceramics with stripes and dots from Adler's Palm Springs Collection.

The coup d'état? A hotel-like master suite bathed in subdued shades of blue and gray, replete with a Connery King Bed upholstered in Valhalla Midnight blue velvet; black lacquer Peking Nesting Side Tables; a sunburst-style Jack Mirror; modern, organic Reform Table Lamps; and of course, room-darkening shades.

"This glamorous, spirited home is a prime example of Jonathan's expertise in perfectly layering midcentury elements with modern textures and methods for a calming but uplifting effect," says Elysa Goldman, Extell's vice president of development. "Perfect for today's modern family, its future residents will find the considerate layouts, and high-quality materials and finishes suiting their every need and desire."



From top: In the living room, a Gold Sunburst Hand-Knotted Rug ties together the apartment's gold accents; the master bedroom's Connery King Bed was upholstered in Valhalla Midnight blue velvet.

Christian

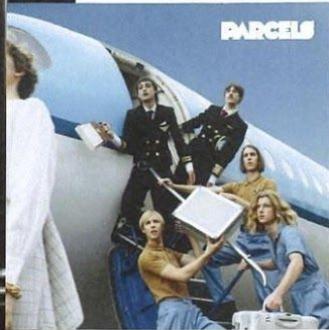
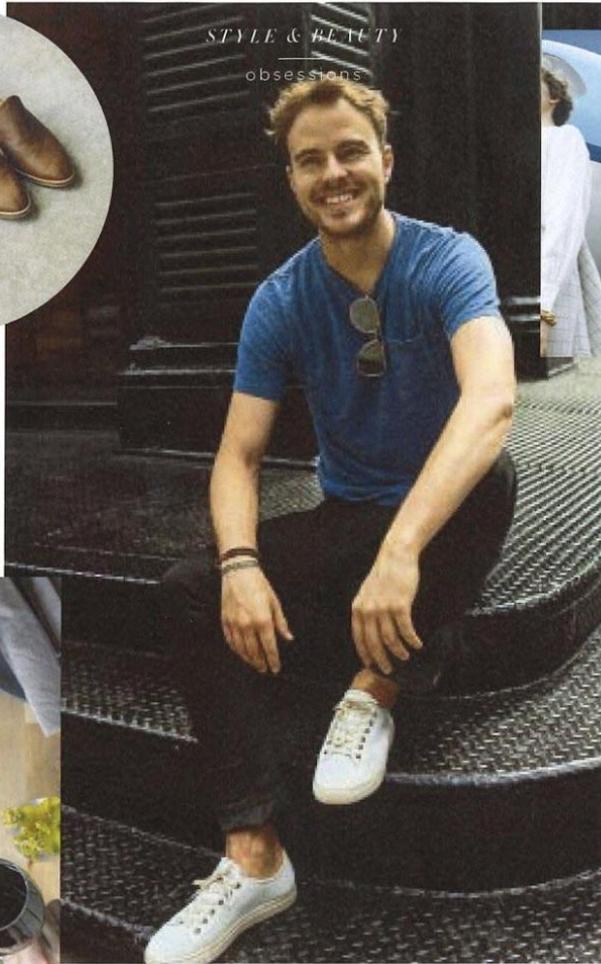
Christina DeMerges



"The Venetian Mule from our women's collection is the epitome of ease. There's a slight heel, but its impossibly comfortable."

Leather Venetian Mule, \$149.25
Prince St., soludos.com

more 25



"My favorite band of the moment, Parcels, just released their first album. It's infectiously funky and cool!"
Parcels, \$12, amazon.com



"A favorite philanthropic cause is The David Sheildrick Wildlife Trust. We created a custom shoe with them this summer and fall."
sheildrickwildlifetrust.org

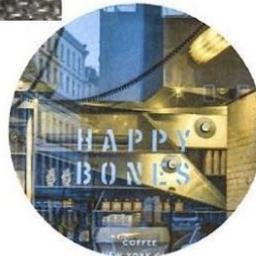


"For weekend brunch, Banter in SoHo. The Banter Bowl at this Aussie cafe is the perfect paring with an aperol spritz."
169 Sullivan St., banternyc.com

IN HIS SHOES

By Kendyl Kearly // Portrait by Ryan Slack

Long before his shoes began popping up everywhere from Nordstrom to Urban Outfitters, Soludos founder Nick Brown possessed a self-described passion for espadrilles. Growing up, he regularly visited Spain with his parents and always purchased a pair upon arrival to wear out through travel. "I saw a real opportunity to bring my nostalgic espadrilles to anybody with feet," he says. "Like the ones I bought in Spain, I wanted to create a unique, chic shoe that was attainable." This month, Soludos launches a customization program for female customers to add embroidery and patches to their purchases—and perhaps find their own passion for the humble espadrille. Here, Brown makes his picks for the best things to experience in Manhattan this winter.



"Happy Bones on Broome Street is my go to coffee shop in the neighborhood—best Cortado in the city."
394 Broome St., happybonesnyc.com

ELEPHANT PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DAVID SHEILDRIK WILDLIFE TRUST. HAPPY BONES PHOTO BY FRANCIS DESROSIERETS



SUPERVISOR LETTER

Christian DeVerger was a great intern for *Manhattan* magazine, and his hard work and inquisitiveness made it clear that he learned a lot throughout the semester. The fact that the Mizzou in NYC program allowed him to intern for five days per week meant that he took a larger share of responsibilities than interns usually do, and he was able to do more writing and some special projects.

A rare feature of this internship is that we rely upon interns to write a substantial number of articles for the print magazine. It always takes a fair amount of coaching to teach interns the correct style and tone, but Christian clearly studied the magazine closely before writing to make sure his pieces were easy to edit. He made it clear early on that he was interested in food writing and therefore had a food story in almost every issue of the magazine this fall. I could tell he was less interested in some of the fashion and beauty topics, but he always approached these stories with just as much intention.

Interns are also responsible for fact-checking the entire issue each month. This process flowed more smoothly than usual because we had Christian in the office every day. Although he had a few missteps in this area, sometimes due to lapses of context or knowledge of New York City, he was a huge help.

Another large component of this internship is research. We task interns with organizing and researching for our editorial lineups. Christian's abilities in this area increased over time as he grew to know New York and *Manhattan's* brand. He worked to provide ideas on art exhibits, restaurant openings, calendar events and gala coverage for several issues.

In general, Christian was the go-to intern for little, miscellaneous tasks such as adding profile ideas to the lineup, writing last-minute blurbs and requesting supplied art for editorial usage. I think the latter task made him more confident in working with publicity contacts and helped him learn what makes high-quality art.

Because Christian had more time in the office and had expressed an interest in editing, I assigned him an extra project. A different intern wrote up a large list of one-sentence restaurant descriptions to put in our dining guide, and Christian edited them for wording, style and format as he had time throughout the internship. He used Track Changes, and I left comments on his edits about why I agreed or disagreed. Christian showed a lot of skill at this, and the assignment prompted him to ask many questions about grammar and punctuation.

Overall, Christian was extremely valuable to the team this semester, and I believe he grew a lot in the process. He never missed an opportunity to raise a question or get the most out of the experience, and his diligence will serve him well in future opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS

The goal of this project was to answer two specific research questions related to newsrooms using proprietary content management systems.

R1: How do newsroom users and content management system developers communicate at news organizations that have built proprietary systems?

R2: Do newsroom actors have input in the design and development process of these systems?

To accomplish this, I drew up a list of questions and traveled to New York, where I studied for a semester and conducted interviews with various members of three large news organizations which had built their CMS from the ground up.

These newsrooms offer unique insight into the communication channels because often they have built development and product teams to help support their newsroom, via both new features, new products, and even entirely new CMSes. Though most newsrooms do not have the resource power to build such teams, in understanding how newsrooms like the three included in this study operate, it may help provide more clarity for smaller operations looking to improve or transition between systems.

In a time of massive change to the landscape of the newsroom, the CMS serves as a prime example of changing technology. Faster moving information distribution, alongside new platforms for said distribution have put a strain on old and existing technologies. With more news being consumed on mobile or digital in general, it has become essential for news

operations to update the infrastructure that holds up the entire newsmaking process. This can prove especially tricky, as it often means upending people's established workflows, disrupting routines and retraining staff to accommodate for new tools and abilities.

Though the overall goal for these transitions is to make the newsroom more efficient and better able to complete tasks, the time it takes for such changes to take place and become routine can be turbulent. In understanding how to best communicate the needs of the newsroom to developers, be they in-house or outsourced, it is easier to ensure that the needs of a specific operation are met. Further, by understanding how to implement new features, journalists in newsrooms of all sizes can be empowered to produce better content overall.

This project chose to look at large, proprietary CMSes because in organizations with the power to implement new strategies, various innovations are more able to come to the forefront. Though the strategies may not mesh in a 1-for-1 way to other news organizations, the underlying principles in which news operations address technology change could help other organizations ensure the process is as pain-free as possible.

This research involved interviews with editors, reporters, developers and product managers at three major news organizations: The New York Times, Mic, and the Daily Beast. Each of these are in various stages of implementing and or maintaining house-made CMSes, and their size, goals audience and primary platforms for distribution differ considerably. Through these contrasts, I was able to see the difference in challenges and strategy, from giant operations 1,400 strong like the New York Times, to smaller, digital-first operations like Mic and The Daily Beast. However, there were specific trends that came to the surface.

Why these sites?

The three sites were chosen based on a number of factors. First and foremost, the sites needed to have developed some kind of proprietary system for managing content in their newsrooms. Even though many larger news organizations have implemented such systems, many more still use outsourced CMSes. The idea that these organizations' systems were proprietary was important, as in many of these organizations, proprietary means that there are development and product teams that exist within the same place as newsroom users. This means that the communication taking place would hypothetically be on a more visible level.

The second factor was time since implementation. In trying to understand the processes that take place when a newsroom transitions between CMSes, it became salient to find organizations that had recently made a switch. This ensured that the people present, willing to take part in the research would have a valuable perspective. Some organizations have built their own CMS years prior, and those developers that built said systems may have since moved on to other projects at different locations.

The New York Times developed its own CMS, called Scoop, which has been in place since 2008. The Times' size and scope of operation (over 1,400 people in the newsroom) allowed them to share how they tackle challenges on a large scale. Further, The Times has some of the highest resource power available in the industry, which allows it more financial capital to invest in innovation teams and technology. Information from the Times also provided context about navigating older structures for print and bridging the gap to digital, as the newsroom is not digital native.

Mic was included in this research as a prime example of a smaller news operation born digitally. Most of its traffic is driven by social media platforms, and thus the tools in place to push content to these platforms were unique. Additionally, Mic had just built a new feature to include into its CMS, and the process by which input was gathered surrounding the implementation of this feature provided some clarity on the workflows in place at digital news organizations.

The final newsroom, The Daily Beast, was included primarily because it had very recently gone through a massive change, replacing its CMS tool within the past year. As a result, members of the product team were able to walk me through that process, from sitting down and planning the system, all the way through implementation. As an example of upending technology change in the newsroom, none is greater than replacing the entire backend. Through conversations with members of the team, certain strategies were highlighted to try and make that process as pain-free as possible.

How does communication take place?

Newsroom communication with CMS developers and designers takes place through a number of different channels. In most cases, these interactions occur through communication apps like Slack, where many newsrooms detail bugs and troubleshoot issues regarding the CMS, and in large organizations like the ones I spoke with, there has been an increased emphasis on building teams that exist and operate within the same physical space as the editorial team of the newsroom.

I found that most of these large organizations have built teams that focus specifically on ensuring that stakeholders' needs are being met and product goals are accurately represented.

These product teams often serve as a bridge between those physically designing the tools and those actually using them. In some cases, depending on the size of both the organization and team, these product teams may or may not include developers, but regardless, there are often individuals specifically in charge of gathering input from the newsroom.

The New York Times offers a clear example of this with the structure of its product team. Within the organization there are specific members, known as product owners. In these positions, a primary responsibility is to ensure that the needs of the various and vast stakeholders within the organization are addressed. “[The] product owner is the person who defines what the goals of the product are, is responsible for making sure that business needs are being met through projects,” says one member of the product team. “[They] bring together design work, engineers, to actually prioritize working and executing to see a project through to the end.”

These product owners have proven essential in redefining workflows in place at The Times. In recent years, there has been an increase in users in the system, and only within the past few years has this particular position existed. These product team members also exist to ensure that the consistent vision in place within the news organization is executed throughout each new feature or product that is being developed. “Because of the size of the newsroom, 1,400 people and the number of platforms that we’re responsible for... the sort of dissonance when you’re moving between the system is really strong with all the editors in the newsroom,” one product team member says. “I think honestly, four or five years ago it just wasn’t really as big of a deal. You didn’t have as many people in the system, you didn’t have as many platforms, but now everything is exploding, with Apple news and Clipboard and Twitter and Facebook and

Snapchat.” Prior to the creation of these various product owners, it was a more piecemeal system that could devolve into “anarchy.”

These product teams cite the emergence of such a diversity of platforms as a primary motivator for the creation of a customizable system. “There are actually an incredible number of points that our journalism needs to reach, and managing that in a system that isn’t customized to your needs is a herculean task as we add more and more things we ask our editors to do every day as part of their workflow,” says another New York Times product team member.

These team structures are not unique to The Times. While the monumental size of the organization offers more resource power to devote to the construction of such teams, other, smaller and digital-first organizations follow similar paths. Both Mic and The Daily Beast have a structure in which product team members are responsible for coordinating between both developers and other stakeholders, including newsroom users.

So where does this coordination happen? I found that at these organizations input is gathered from the newsroom primarily around specific occurrences: during transition into a new system or feature and back-and-forth regarding maintenance and troubleshooting of existing systems.

Communication in transit

One key locus where conversation takes place at these organizations is in periods of transition. With new and changing platforms, such as Apple News and Clipboard, news organizations are frequently changing the backend to keep up. One reporter stated that within his last two positions, he’d had experience with four different CMSes. These periods of change are occurring frequently, and it requires newsroom users to more often acclimate to new tools and

workflows, pushing people outside established comfort zones. It is thus essential to build with transition in mind, something that the Daily Beast did with the implementation of its new CMS.

The Daily Beast very recently rolled out a new set of tools, known as the PTK, or Publisher's Tool Kit, serving as the organization's new CMS. This tool exists as the central system which the newsroom operates, and as a result, those at the Daily Beast set out to ensure that the needs of the newsroom were addressed when making this switch through a number of initiatives.

To gain input from someone on the newsroom side, management at the organization assigned a former managing editor to the team responsible for the rollout of this system. In having someone present that had experience on both the CMS product side and the newsroom side, a method was in place to ensure that the newsroom was represented within every conversation related to this transition:

“Having me in the newsroom, having me be with the tech team as they built this and scoped this out, from the beginning we said, what are the things [the old CMS] currently does that we have to maintain? We had to be able to put stories on the home page, we had to put stories on the cheat sheet on the home page which is our breaking news product, we had to be able to put a photo on a story, things like that. Then we went through a list of things the system didn't do, and we wanted it to do.”

This also provided a clear channel for newsroom users to communicate to a trusted person that they had previously worked with and allowed them to be comfortable making requests and navigating this transition process “Because I came out of the newsroom and managed the newsroom for half a year before I came to product, people usually just email me or slack me directly,” says this product team member. “They were perfectly happy to take my recommendations when I was sitting on the newsroom side, so I'm always hoping that they'll take those recommendations now that I'm sitting on the other side of the table.”

It also made it clear that frequent meetings with editorial executives can further ensure that stakeholders' needs are being accurately represented, provided those executives are successfully gathering information from those newsroom users they are managing. By conducting these weekly meetings with editorial executives and clearly communicating where the focus is being directed, The Daily Beast has limited confusion and wasted resources. As another product member puts it:

“There’s a great relation between the production/editorial and the design and development team. They meet regularly with the editor and chief, with the senior editor to discuss what comes next, what their wish list is, kind of make a road map of what’s realistic timeframes, that kind of thing. I think that’s the key, having a constant dialogue between editorial and the development team so that they understand what they want and it’s realistic, to kind of work together to get something out that is realistic.”

To further limit disruption, the Daily Beast also gave early access to tech savvy newsroom users so that pain points could be ironed out before a full launch. When the transition was about to go live, multiple weeks prior, specific users were given access to the product. Rather than yanking the rug out from under the entire newsroom, this gradual transition, piece-by-piece allowed users to get more comfortable and well acclimated to the new system.

According to another Daily Beast product team member:

“[Power users] were given access to PTK on the staging server, so that we were able to really get comfortable with it before they flipped the switch for good. The longer they have to play with something, and they see the environment where they’re like, ‘Oh god I’m gonna make a mistake, I’m gonna crash our website,’ the better.

At The New York Times, a similar transition process is taking place. Though they are not switching the entire CMS, the organization is moving between article composition tools. Its new tool, known as Oak, has been rolled out to a large portion of the newsroom in recent months. This tool, which has been in development for numerous years, is managed by the product team,

which exists as a connection point between those physically developing the tools and the users integrating the tool into its work process. The Times used similar strategies as the Daily Beast to limit disruption.

Like The Daily Beast, gradual product rollout was key. Individual desks were asked to use Oak to create as much content as possible and provide feedback on what was working well about the system and what wasn't before the entire newsroom was forced to use the product. "We asked [the climate desk] to start using Oak a number of months ago," says a product team member. "The hope is that they'll use Oak for everything. The reality and expectation is that occasionally we need to use the existing tool for some things that Oak can't quite do yet, or for workflows where maybe it's a fast moving news situation ... They don't know how to break news using Oak yet."

In an effort to help with these breaking news situations and address the issue that the climate desk was facing in reporting breaking news, the team went back and looked at adding features like collaborative editing to help speed up the process. "One hypothesis that we've had, is that if you allow people to work at the same time, to write headlines, place art, view the story, that will allow the desk to work faster and more comfortably in breaking news situations," says the Oak product team member. "So after the climate desk started using these features, the percentage of stories they did using Oak rose from 70% to 97%."

The product team at The Times also tries to go beyond analytics. Another team member states that gathering feedback directly from users is an essential method in determining the successes and failures of a given system. "We look to satisfaction from our users," they say. "If we launch something new are they struggling to use it, are they expressing frustration and

difficulty? We try to do surveys to ask how people are feeling about the tools. The general health and happiness of our users is another input whether things are successful.”

Beyond large, groundbreaking shake ups like entirely new CMSes or big changes to core systems like article editors, conversation between users and developers also occurs with the implementation of smaller features. These are the individual tools that exist within the systems to help make the lives of journalists easier. Things like the collaborative editing feature mentioned above in the Oak rollout are a perfect example of this communication taking place through testing and analytics. The Daily Beast also provided an example of conversation taking place around a specific feature, centered on the use of capsule to store code within stories.

These modules, while allowing users a great deal of freedom to adjust specific elements within the page, could also break the page and cause confusion. “The problem with giving that kind of freedom, kind of being able to hack code into the page, is you lose style, you lose consistency throughout the site,” says a developer at The Daily Beast. “I might put in blue font, but it should be black, but the designer of the website wants everything to be very consistent. It crashed the site a number of times. If somebody puts messy code in there, it can create all sorts of problems, and it’s kind of like finding a needle in a haystack at times, it’s kind of like, which story has the bad code in it.”

When issues with bad code come up, pushing the the required platforms, be they Apple News, Clipboard or MSN, becomes a challenge, as many of these services will simply skip over articles that don’t meet the specific, individual standards for use. As a result of the somewhat stringent platform requirements, alongside user error, The Daily Beast opted to remove the

feature. Though this has reduced the flexibility within the system, the priority was placed on timely and efficient production of content.

At all the news organizations that I spoke with, there is a massive focus placed on this philosophy of efficiency. At The Times, this strategy has become paramount in reevaluation workflows. At The Daily Beast, it was the primary motivator for the construction of its new platform, and at Mic, taking action to ensure journalists have as much time as possible to devote to the production of content seems central to its strategy. A prime example of this communication was clear to see in Mic's newsroom.

Mic recently made the decision to invest resources in the creation of a feature addition to its CMS story tool which would allow for the construction of tap-through stories to be hosted on a number of different platforms. There overarching goal for the tool was to allow a single newsroom user the ability to add stories to a queue and populate the platform without having to have any knowledge of design or animation. "That's what makes it brilliant for Mic, because you have our Snapchat team editors and our Facebook team editors [that] are so overwhelmed with what they have to do for their show," says the product team member behind this tool. "This tool is perfect for our audience team who focuses on social media and products, and since this daily news piece is going to be on social media and our website, they're the ideal people to make this. With the tool you can make it such a small amount of time, versus what you'd have to do with multiple people."

This idea of efficiency clearly bleeds over into the tools being created. Developer time is a resource, and spending it on tools that won't actually help the workflow or help users be more capable in their production can be seen as somewhat of a waste. "We don't want to make

decisions in the short term that are going to mean we're going to do a lot of work for something that won't pay off later," says a product team member at The Times. There is an ongoing conversation within these news organizations about how feature rich the CMSes need to be in order to be successful. Though these operations expressed the desire to empower the newsroom to be able to create better content, time and responsiveness can sometimes overshadow creativity and customization within these tools.

Finding a balance between features and usability was one of the key challenges in designing these systems. Too much, and users get bogged down, forget about capabilities, or can break things, as in the case of The Daily Beast, but too little, and users can feel hampered or hemmed in by the very system that is meant to empower their work. While this could be seen as detrimental to some journalists, the users that I spoke with claimed that responsiveness was also a big goal in their work as well:

"Even though it's so barebones on the surface, behind the scenes it's really capable ... One thing I like about it is, you copy a YouTube link into the body of the page and all of a sudden it automatically embeds the video ... I would say that It's really nice if you have to get the news up quickly, just being able to open up the CMS, edit in the CMS and just write it right there. I used to write my stories first in evernote and then copy it over to the CMS but to just be able to write in the CMS kind of shortens things."

When comparing this CMS to the old one, this particular reporter does lament the loss of more customizable features to build more in depth story experiences. "[It is] really simple, it's good if you're writing a quick post or a medium post, but if you want something that's really involved, the CMS may not let you do that. You kind of have to have special privileges."

The input from this reporter highlights this dichotomy between powerful and usable. Part of this decision-making process is related to out of the diversity in skill sets and user capabilities within the newsroom. With so many different people with hands in a system, it seems that these

large organizations have placed bets on usability first, adding features as it goes, based on what is found to be effective.

Bugs and troubleshooting

The other central area where interaction between newsroom users and product team/developers occurs is when troubleshooting issues or fixing bugs. In this mode of operation, the goal is to create a stable product that breaks as little as possible, allowing newsroom users the ability to continually put out work with limited interruption. Maintaining this stability requires communication from both parties.

On the user side, they are expected to report issues that they see within the system via Slack channels or direct communication with the product and development team. In all of the newsrooms that I spoke with, Slack is the primary avenue used for reporting bugs, and some of the CMSes also have a baked in method for users to report errors, as is the case in Mic's CMS.

Users also frequently collaborate with one another to draw from the community pool of knowledge, similar to what is outlined to take place in the Communities of Practice theory in sociology, where individuals within the community come together to share information about work practices and usage.

At The Times, these power users often become go-to's for many in the newsroom when attempting to work through issues. As one editor says "we make the mistake ourselves and then work our way out of it. Some of it is just talking with editors in the room. Usually there are a couple power users in the room on whatever program it is that can help." Another mentions that his go to power users evolved "organically ... friends from having worked on stuff."

It is these power users who are often asked to join in beta testing groups for new features, as mentioned in The Daily Beast rollout and the Oak launch, and often times they are responsible for helping get other users acclimated to the new systems, or “evangelizing” as product team and editorial team members from The Daily Beast and The Times put it.

On the development side, communication related to troubleshooting arises after data has been gathered through the respective channels, be they the newsroom help Slack at The Times, or similarly titled options at both The Daily Beast and Mic. “There’s a web tech channel, for the ‘Oh god, it’s down,’” moments says a Daily Beast product team member. Another Daily Beast product team member states that “Roughly 16 to 18 hours a day, someone will respond to you in a timely fashion, if you say ‘hey, I keep getting logged out,’ or ‘hey, the screen is frozen.’”

By establishing clear and working spaces for this troubleshooting, these organizations are ensuring that users are able use a clear channel to communicate problems.

What’s it mean for other newsrooms

It is clear that these product teams and developers are gathering input from various newsroom users. They communicate through meetings, and via surveys, testing periods and bug fixing in Slack channels and other interoffice channels. So what does knowledge about this communication offer other news organizations? There are a few guiding principles regarding CMS use practices and communication with developers which may be useful for newsrooms, both large and small, that will certainly face CMS related issues.

Make time for specific interaction

It is clear from these conversations that newsrooms that have built its own systems are either making time, or attempting to make time for conversations that revolve around the CMS

and workflow practices. A common thread for most of the developers and tech people that I spoke with during these interviews was to suggest frequent conversation between editorial and development/product. These types of communication are not always easy to establish within organizations, especially with bandwidth being consumed by a variety of ever-increasing responsibilities. With so much on the plates of both developers and editorial staff, oftentimes these interactions are strained or don't take place at all.

In Mic's newsroom, though the product and editorial team sit in the same office and frequently collaborate, it can be difficult to find the bandwidth to schedule these kinds of meetings, even though members on both sides of the divide believe them important. One newer member of the Mic product team weighed in on this interaction:

“We had a product team meeting a few weeks ago where we talked about actually sitting down with the editorial team and figuring out what struggles they face and how we could help them as a product team. No one on the team, even though some have been there for years, could think of a single time they've done that ... No one had ever taken the time to set up a meeting and just sit down and say, what are the things that really cause an obstacle in your reporting, whether that be transcribing or whatever, what tools could we build or add to our CMS to make your life easier?”

Though the Mic product team may not have specifically sat down in a scheduled meeting, there have been frequent and consistent efforts by individual members to and leaders to get a gauge on the wants and needs of the editorial team. Another member of the product team at Mic is frequently meeting with members individually to learn about the wants and needs of the editorial staff:

“When it comes to the CMS specifically, we do try to talk as much as we can with editorial and see what their needs are ... I try to talk as much as I can with people on editorial with what their needs are and how we can help them out more. We're working on building that out a little bit more with a team that's in the office .. having regular meetings and making sure that comes in a more structured way.”

This was also true of the product team at The New York Times. “We’re also working with the folks with design specialty to think about how the workflow fits together with individual people and create a better vision for how the entire CMS functions as a whole, so that folks are not having cognitive dissonance as they’re moving from photo interfaces to homepage interfaces to planning interfaces,” says a product team member at The Times. “Very much a work in progress, but something that we’re excited to be including the design team to help us do more.” The theme holds true when examining conversations with The Daily Beast as well. “You just have to be super specific in your communication, both in what it looks like and how it should function,” says one of their product team members.

It is important to understand that time strain is not unique to any one news operation. Across the board, even with massive operations, this can be an issue. In smaller newsrooms, where the CMS might not exist as a homegrown entity, there still may be a great deal of benefit from having newsroom users take a small portion of their time to meet with CMS developers from time to time to iron out issues.

The benefits of this thought process and these meetings were made abundantly clear during the interviews. Each of the three news organizations interviewed have its product/developers in the same building as the editorial staff. This allows for a very personal relationship to form between the two groups, as was the case at The Daily Beast, where a member of the newsroom took the lead on the development project and they say that they “sit in the row that butts up against the row in the newsroom, so I literally sit next to 2 reporters and an editor.” At The Times, product team members and developers make “house calls [in relation to visiting various news desks], so we can often see the problem folks are having in real time.” In

the case of the Mic developer mentioned above, they were individually meeting with users to feel out problem areas. This makes a strong case that personal face-to-face communication is valuable to ensure that not only do problems get solved, but that users and developers can learn to more clearly communicate and feel heard by one another. Though not all newsrooms have the luxury of having developers exist in their space, in today's tech-first day and age, there are endless possibilities for remote networking and meeting spaces that may be able to be used to facilitate better communication between the two parties.

Documentation and its limits

It was highlighted during these interviews that documentation of features is essential in ensuring that newsroom users have resources available to teach them about the tools at their disposal. With the Daily Beast launch, this documentation was helpful in easing people through the transition process. "It was a lot of handouts, it was a lot of lists," they say. "A lot of in-person training. [We] went one by one and went here's how to use it, here's how to build an article ... for the remote folks we did them all over slack and calls and did screen sharing."

The idea that technology changes should be documented is nothing new; however, when speaking with product team members across these organizations, many stressed the difficulty in getting people to actually find and read provided documentation. At The Daily Beast, all features have documentation that exists for users to access, but according to one Product Team member, getting users to actually use it is rare:

"We did Google Docs how to build a story, how to build a chain, how to update certain things on our website. The problem with the office mostly is that people don't look at them, or they can't find it when the time comes, they're actually doing something, so we chime in and we walk them through it. My experience is like no matter how many documents you give people, they're not going to take the time to read them all."

This was also an issue highlighted by a product team member at Mic as they detailed their experiences working collaboratively with others in the newsroom:

“After every meeting I would send out the minutes for the meeting and before the next meeting I would send out this agenda based on what would happen would happen last meeting ... but what I had noticed is that even though I was going out of my way to do all this ... there were definitely a good amount not reading it, so we’d show up to our meetings and they would completely forget everything we had discussed at the last meeting.”

Even though these documents were created and sent directly over Slack, there was still a challenge in getting people to care about changes that didn’t directly affect their work in a way that was visible to these users. Therefore, making these documents as official and easy to access as possible was the strategy that his particular product team member employed. “I literally had to copy and paste the documents into the email, because they just wouldn’t take the extra step. Which makes sense with how we use technology today. People don’t want to take the extra steps, they want to see it right where they are.”

It is important for newsrooms to understand that with extra responsibilities and time constraints, it can be difficult for users to make time to read intense documentation. This can be especially true when users are already unsure of features and hitting the ground in a breaking news situation where time is of the essence and taking the time to go read through documentation isn’t an option. The two takeaways here are that the more convenient and easy to access this documentation is, the more likely people will use it, and by making specific time to learn about these features, users will more easily be able to make brain space for successfully acclimating a new tool into their workflow.

Navigating workarounds

The idea that any CMS is perfect should be dispelled immediately. Even within industry leading operations, there are bugs and problems and limitations. This is a fact of life that every newsroom user should accept. What this means is that in order for operations to move smoothly, it is essential to quickly learn and acclimate to the workarounds in place within a given system. It is also necessary for users to understand that not every bug or problem can be fixed or will be the highest priority. “You kind of have to live with some things that aren’t perfect,” says a product team member at The Daily Beast. “Often editorial requests get overshadowed by business requests. If revenue is tied to something, that would probably get priority over an edit request ... If it’s hampering our ability to react quickly to breaking news, that’s going to be at the top of the list, revenue is at the top of the list.”

While this might be troubling to some newsroom users who are trying to enhance storytelling capabilities, for purposes of communication, these product team members suggest that keeping these priorities in mind can better help newsroom users understand where input might actually make a difference or be utilized. “If someone comes to our team and says ‘hey I’m the commerce editor and really want this, this and this, [they need to] make the case for it.’” Says a product team member at the Daily Beast. “Tell us with data why this is a business priority, tell us why this is going to help the business, tell us what’s the smallest version of it we can build, what’s the largest version of it we can build? What’s the priority on it, what’s the urgency?”

These product teams are, at the very core, balancing business needs and user needs, and therefore, when users can understand this when they come to make a request, it may be more likely that said request is able to be executed. Further, it should also be noted that these systems

go through a series of compromises in order to find this balance. One such example came up in talking with the team members at the Daily Beast. Through their transition process, one particular issue remained constant with the system: the order of the bylines. The CMS was unable to distinguish which name came first in the byline when publishing stories, and this issue persisted from the onset of the switch until very recently, a time period of over a year. Though this wasn't an issue that was affecting the business end or the bottom line of the organization, byline organization can be an important verifier of status and accomplishment for journalists. After such a long time dealing with this issue, it finally became a business issue as journalists got more and more upset that such a small issue was never resolved. . In this situation The Daily Beast realized that to keep the reporters happy -- or as one staffer put it, 'as a retention play' -- other important business concerns would have to be reorganized, and the issue was finally put on the docket for their development team.

What this example highlights is that problems arise, and though business needs often come first, the integrity, quality and skill of the reporters working at these organizations is valuable, and by making the time to address these issues and find compromises, the organization was able to navigate a successful solution.

Moving forward

It would be naive to think that this information and these ideals will fit with each and every news organization dealing with CMS related changes. That said, these tidbits of knowledge gleaned from industry leading organizations may begin to build a framework for other organizations to build upon. It is clear that proactive thought and planning is an absolute necessity for any operation dealing with technology. Finding the time to make these plans may be difficult,

especially when news organizations are facing ever-tightening financial constraints, and those newsroom users and developers have more and more piling up on their plates, but it is apparent that all of these news organizations are either already, or attempting to establish direct and deliberate times for meetings between product and editorial to discuss ways in which the organization can better empower and enable its members.

Through these meetings, these organizations are also putting in time ensuring that development time is being spent on tools that will actually maintain healthy and consistent usage patterns over time. In addition, the active use and maintenance of Slack channels to solve problems related to the CMS allow newsroom users a quick and effective communication route to report bugs. In situations where these problems are unable to be solved, these organizations also direct the newsroom to specific power users which are able to share knowledge about workarounds and other solutions which can be used to problem solve. These users are also tapped by product teams to help lead the effort through transitions and “evangelize” others to improve opinions surrounding new products.

Though I believe these principles are applicable to news organizations large and small, there is room for more research in this particular field. Figuring out better ways for newsrooms to budget time and energy to solve these problems is an ongoing task, and providing users with better and more powerful tools that can still be fast and efficient is certainly another avenue that could, and should, be explored.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

The Daily Beast 1

C: How did the conversation to make that transition happen, were you present for that?

E: Yeah so I was hired in 2015 as the assistant managing editor and we knew at that time we were getting ready to roll off, cq5, it's an adobe product it was terrible and we knew that it would be part of my job to design the system with the product and tech team because I had previously done a wordpress migration with foreign policy when I was working there. And so, I had already had some experience building out cms features for a newsroom. Then we did a lot of research and then it was kind of going through the election was crazy. So we, now I'm trying to think of all the timeline things, its 2018 this year, we launched a year ago in 2017. So leading up through the elections, we were still on cp5, then we started working on the toolkit in earnest about the end of that year. We had been working to design it, we're a small team here, the tech team im on currently is very small, we have like 4 developers a ux person and a developer and a product manager and me. That was kind of it. We built the system to be very small. It didn't do a lot when we first launched, all it did was you could build articles and you could put them on the homepage and that was about it. And then over the course of the last 15 months, we've spent a lot of time integrating a photo gallery template, new typography features like pull quotes and things like that, little section breakers, things to make the articles look more elevated not just text with a photo. It took us about a year total to build the PTK, published tool kit that's what we call it, and yeah, we launched in may of last year, 2017. And we've just been slowly rolling out features. Our next big feature project, we're launching a longform template that goes full width and has a different ad cadence.

C: So when you first sat down and decided to make that switch, how did the team make sure that the right features were getting implemented, what did that conversation sound like?

E: having me in the newsroom, having me be with the tech team as they built this and scoped this out, from the beginning we said, what are the things cq5 currently does that we have to maintain, we had to be able to put stories on the home page, we had to put stories on the cheat sheet on the home page which is our breaking news product, we had to be able to put a photo on a story,

things like that, then when went through a list of things the system didn't do, and we wanted it to do fro like MVP. So it had to work on mobile that was very important to me.

C: The other system wasn't able to do that?

E: No. So it was very important to me that an editor on the weekend or an editor at night or an editor in the early morning could easily make updates to stories, headlines photos, the homepage order, without being tied to a laptop 24/7. So that was like my biggest thing. I don't care what it does elsewhere, it just has to work on mobile. I think my experience working with a wordpress roll out was that the opportunity with wordpress are immensely large, but ultimately to ship something, you kind of have to go after, you have to pick an MVP stik with, and hope you have time to keep building around it after you've shipped. So for me, the way the team was approaching was very, what are all the things you wished it could do. I was just a little blown away by that because I had only ever worked in these MVP doomsday preppers situations. We eventually got there. We eventually got down to when we were launching, what's above the line what's below the line and what's making it in the final cut, but at the outset, it was, what are all the things you wish it could do? We wish it could do collaborative editing like google docs, we wish it could build our newsletters so we could move off of xx newsletter template builder. We wish that it could be integrated with RSS feeds so that things go automatically off platform. So we mapped out this huge wishlist and used one of those big whiteboards that takes up a whole wall and then we started paring it down and saying what really matters? Does it really matter if you can create tags in the article as you're adding them or should we have a separate mechanism for that? We ended up doing a separate mechanism for that because our tags were, we had 55k tags that were misspelled that were duplicates, we had donald trump donald j trump and president trump. Things like that. So we were really trying to, once every field that we built needed to be a field that would actually built, where we ended up in cq5 we had a lot of fields that was like use this one not that one, fields were poorly named, it was very confusing to use, it was very important to me that if a field was named something that made sense to the journalist, not just that it made sense on a data integrity sense on the back end, which I think is how products often get built. It's like well this is how it makes sense for the database to put these fields together because they're linked on this table, but for me when an editor sits down to build there story in the cms, all the headline fields go together, all the images fields go together things like that.

C: definitely, I think that's a big reason why I decided to focus my research on this particular topic was because, in my experiences, it's a similar, at school they had switched to a system out of the box, and it made it very difficult because there were a lot of sense to the people that were using them whereas on the back end, like you said, it may make sense to them. But that communication is often difficult because the people that are there don't necessarily have the

perfect vocabulary to communicate what they're seeing. So you kind of served as the link to the newsroom in those conversations then, when you were making this switch?

E: that's correct.

C: it sounds like you're still adding, still building on this system continually, so when there's something, is there like a channel or a process for people that have suggestions or things that they'd like to see added or this something that I'd like it to do? What do those sort of conversations look like?

E: because I came out of the newsroom and managed the newsroom for half a year before I came to product, people usually just email me or slack me directly, really a lot of my work now as a product manager is really similar to the work I was doing in my old role, where it's scoping out the tools, making recommendations to the editorial team and the newsroom to say, I think we should do this and here's why and I think it makes sense. And they were perfectly happy to take my recommendations when I was sitting on the newsroom side, so I'm always hoping that they'll take those recommendations now that I'm sitting on the other side of the table. But like the product team meets with our executive editor weekly, so we go over priorities. They always know where our working on, we have good visibility into our roadmap, that goes out once a week to key stakeholders and department heads and they can see what we've accomplished for the week, what's on deck for the week following and then they can look at our roadmap which is usually flushed out to about a quarter in advance. So they know, so like one example of a thing that has come up several times is when we built the PTK, for some reason the byline field doesn't respect which order you put the bylines in, it's just a weird glitch of postgres the way that field is structured doesn't realize 1st and second, which as you know for journalists is very important, first byline vs. second byline makes a big difference. So it's been almost 2 years now that we have this glitch that they just show up randomly on the home page or the article page, and we've just told journalists sorry. We know it's a big deal, but it hasn't been a big enough priority for us to be like fix it. But recently our editor and chief came to us and said, look people are getting a little up in arms about this, it's really important, can you fix it this year, so we're like yeah, we'll scope it out, we'll get it in the queue we'll see against what can we prioritize in the meantime to work on this, things like that. So it's a pretty open conversation, we have a channel on slack where people are like, it's a websupport channel where if people are having issues with the PTK, roughly 16-18 hours a day someone will respond to you in a timely fashion, if you say hey I keep getting logged out, or hey the screen is frozen. We have a lot of remote folks so we can't always help them in the office.

C: So that leads me to another question. How is it structured there. How many people are in the office as opposed to working remotely, and if someone does have a problem what is the

likelihood that someone, and where in proximity and how closely is the newsroom linked to the dev team.

E: So I sit in the newsroom. We have an open floor plan so 2 rows are tech team and three are the newsroom, and I sit in the row that butts up against the row in the newsroom, so I literally sit next to 2 reporters and an editor, so they can find us pretty easily. We're probably about 50 editorial total, 80% here in the NY about 12 are down in DC and there's a handful in the UK and Paris, so often what will happen is our early morning editor is based in London and he'll run a separate issue, and we sometimes can't tell is it a GDPR issue is it your home net, or did we really break something but those are the usual suspects.

C: How do you measure the success of a given feature when you implement it?

E: Sure, so we recently implemented, we call it fancy links, which is sort of a dumb name, just a single story recirculation module that an editor can add in their story and shows up as an embedded object within the text, and it's just a nice treatment of a link to another daily beast story. If you go to almost any story on the homepage now, you'll find one or two scattered throughout, and so we launched it, and we found that, we put tracking analytics on them and we saw that they got good impression, they got good click through and they were actually outperforming our other recirc modules so based on that early look, I'm like wow, people are really clicking on these, I kind of dug deeper into the data and did some analysis saying like, this is the prime place to put them to make sure that they get most number of impressions. These are the types of stories to choose to lead to click throughs and things like that, and gave a really good report to give to the editors to say, not only should you be using this, here's why you should be using this tool and here are the real business gains for us to drive our readers to that article.

C: Another thing that I guess is similar to that, you'd mentioned ranking your priorities for certain things, so what drives that, what are the underarching, the driving principles for ranking those priorities, what drives that?

E: Yeah, so it's absolutely the business. So our team supports the entire business, not just the newsroom, so we're 2 product managers, 6 engineers, a designer and product and tech lead, and you know, if we're in a revenue crunch, we might put all editorial projects on hold to switch gears to drum up some ad revenue, membership was kind of a big thing for us this year, so a lot of things were on the backburner as we tried to up our first paid product. We had no paid product. We know from quarter to quarter what our big themes are, and then it's just constantly asking our executives. When they bring a new idea to us, do we update the news letters page or do we update the membership page, do we work on the PTK or do we work on ad revenue tickets. They just tell us what the priority is from the business standpoint, you know if someone

comes to our team and says hey I'm the commerce editor and really want this this and this, make the case for it, tell us with data why this is business priority, tell us why this is going to help the business, tell us what's the smallest version of it we can build, what's the largest version of it we can build? What's the priority on it, what's the urgency. Do we need to build this gift guide tool now? Because we're heading into Black Friday season? Do we need to do some Midterm stuff because the Midterms are coming up? And things like that. So some things are pegged around time of year and seasonality and some things are just based on purely, is it gonna drive the bottom line, does it make sense for the business. Then you kind of look at these requests, like but the byline order doesn't work in the broader sense of that change isn't gonna make us any money, that change isn't going to gain us any readers, but it's a retention play, to keep our staff happy.

C: When there's something that does go wrong, you had mentioned that there's a channel that people can use to report those features, what's the average, what would you say the average that something, not that someone isn't using it correctly, but that something is actually broken, how often does that come up would you say?

E: Couple times a month, maybe once or twice or week at the most. If we've deployed something and broken it by accident, that sometimes will be an issue. We maintain a stage version and a production version of the PTK, and every once in a while, wires will get crossed and so for like, recently we had a glitch where if you deleted a photo on stage, you actually deleted it on production as well, which is obviously not how that's meant to be behaving. So stuff like that will happen every once in a while. We're in a pretty good stable maintenance place, when we launched we had some errors, we had issues where if you waited too long to save, you might lose your whole body of work, or if you left the window idle, it would log you out, but not tell you you'd been logged out, so then when you went to make changes, you might save over someone else's changes, or whatever the case might be. WE've mostly ironed out most of those issues, which is great.

C: Talking about some of those transitional issues, how do you make the people that are using it in the newsroom, how do you make that easier for them?

E: I'm a big handouts person, I'm a big documentation person. That's been a part of my job, every job that I've worked at has been around training people in the newsroom and so it was a lot of handouts it was a lot of lists, a lot of in person training and went one by one and went here's how to use it, here's how to build an article you know, we had for the remote folks we did them all over slack and calls and did screen sharing, which is super interesting, because if you think about people that are not great with tech to begin with, sometimes folks who are working remote to get them, it was not only an issue to teach them to use it, but to get them, to teach them how to

answer a Slack call, or how to use a google hangout. But again since that's always been baked into every job that I've had, which is kind of a weird quirk of my career. It was very natural for me, again I had the relationship with newsroom, where I knew everybody, I knew what they did, I knew their individual challenges, I was able to really tailor all of that training and say look, you're the weekend editor, here's how to do it on the phone. You're a section editor who's not great with the internet, but let me show you how to use chrome, so that you, we don't support any other browsers technically, so we had a lot of editors using safari on their phones and it was like, it doesn't work, and so you have to download chrome, here's how to use it on your phone, here's how to bookmark it, things like that, it was really intensive, especially because we were making so many changes at first. The tool kit, when we first launched it, it was very small, so one example, was on the homepage ,you couldn't search for articles, you had to know the exact slug of an article and paste them in. Over time we realized that was not a good workflow and it was not efficient so we made it so you can search in a drop down each field and would autofill based on the most recently published headlines. We were doing everything so quickly, on a Monday we might send out guidelines saying, build your story this way, but by Friday or the following Wednesday it might be a totally different method, so it was a lot of updating. We probably could stand to update all of our documentation currently, because it's so dissaparte, there's like this flurry of handouts that came out as we were rolling the system out, and then there's been one off documentation for each feature as we've rolled them out but we don't have like a comprehensive guidebook to using the PTK. I just did some stuff recently for the newsroom about using a lot of the little tools, so that's kind of been updated. We presented at the all hands, I've done some Slack call trainings with folks who are remote. So it's kind of like an ongoing process. Our production manager onboards everybody when they start. The nice thing about how simple it is, how easy it is to use it, is it's really easy to teach people. They don't have a ton of options when they get in there. The menu is pretty sparse, it says create a new article, create a new gallery, manage authors and that's it.

C: That was my next question. How does somebody new that comes into the newsroom how would they make sure they know how to use it.

e: Everyone gets on boarded the first day.

C: Cool, so you said that there were handouts that come out with every new feature. Are those sent out to everybody?

E: Yeah, I usually send them in slack and send them over email as well. Our brand strategy team uses the PTK as well, so for sponsored content and branded posts, so I often will include them on those emails so they can be optimizing their posts as well.

C: So I think that's pretty much it as far as questions that I had. I was wondering if there were any examples of recently features that were suggested or that you were working on that have become, maybe that weren't originally thought of to be mainstays in the system, but then have become central, kind of what that looks like from start to finish? Have there been any features that have been cemented into the CMS and what the design process, if you could sketch that out if possible?

E: I would say the fancy links is the best example. IT was our 10th anniversary this month of being a news organization, we wanted to put together this special package, but we didn't want to build new pages into the website. What we decided to do instead was use keyword pages and then use article pages. I had a series of fancy links embedded in them. I'll send you the links because it makes more sense. And so we built fancy links for this 10th anniversary package thinking like oh we'll probably use them here and again, but they performed so well, and they had that great click through rate that they've literally been added to every story now.

C: I'd love to take a look, it'd be easier for me to visualize.

E: Yeah, and I can also send you the documentation that I sent around the newsroom with some data points in it. You're not going to share the internal data stuff?

C: No.

E: Okay, cool. So I'll send you some of that so you can see how we originally, the original use case for this one time project and see how they've evolved.

C: Perfect.

E: I'm about to get kicked out of this conference room...

C: That's fine, I think I got everything.. (relevant info ends here)

Daily Beast 2

C: I was kind of wondering if I could get some perspective on the newsroom users side from you.

F: So I manage production for the website. How my role has evolved, I came from newsweek, we merged with the Daily Beast about five years ago, when they got rid of newsweek, I stayed with The Daily Beast. So our team used to be much larger....It kind of shrunk down to the point where it's just me, because the editors are able to do most of, if not all the production work on their own, whereas before, we had a system where it was just too difficult for them to wrap their heads around, so that's where the production team pretty much ... whereas now, I'm just here as support.

C: So my first question related to CMS stuff, I'm wondering who is responsible for making the decisions for making changes or implementing new features, or how that process kind of comes about?

F: There's a great relation between the production/editorial and the design and development team. They meet regularly with the editor and chief, with the senior editor to discuss what comes next, what their wish list is, kind of make a road map of what's realistic timeframes, that kind of thing. I think that's the key is having a constant dialogue between editorial and the development team so that they understand what they want and it's realistic, to kind of work together to get something out that is realistic.

C: The point of contact between them is usually the editor-and-chief, so how is the process from people in the newsroom, if they want something added or don't understand something about the system, how do they make those requests or concerns known. Is there a specific channel that sort of occurs on?

F: So we do use Slack as a newsroom communication tool, and that is often how these things come about so, somebody was building a story and they wanted to insert, say some sort of a document, right now we only can upload something to the document cloud, and then we can insert it into PTK, so what would happen, is they would chime in, there's a web tech channel, also for OH GOD it's down, but also, am I missing something, is there a tool ... and then we have a production channel, so they probably would post it there and people would chime in and would either set them straight on the tools that we do have, and have a workaround for, okay we can't ... , (4:40) but if there's a reason they really want xx, then we can escalate to the request channel, and emma would pick it up and put it on the ticket for her discussions with our editor-in-chief. They also are really good about when there are picking up something so they get a big focus group so they don't build something and we find out later someone else loves it but would rather have a different feature. They open it up so they get a lot of feedback so they're not backtracking.

C: You mention making sure that these newsroom users are well versed enough in some of the features that are available, so what is the process look like to get people acclimated to the system. I know you just made a switch in CMSes, so I imagine that kind of can be a difficult transition for some people when they're familiar with one set of tools and then switch to something totally different. What is the process for making that transition as easy as possible in the newsroom?

F: So, weeks before we launched the new CMS, key people in the newsroom were already using the previous CMS, so they probably would be classified as power users, they were given access to PTK on the staging server. So that we were able to really get comfortable with it before they flipped the switch for good. That's great for, like you said, you know people get nervous with change. So once, the longer the have to play with something, and they see the environment where they're like, Oh god I'm gonna make a mistake, I'm gonna crash our website, the better. So those sandboxes to let people test out new features, like in that case like a whole platform was great, keeping everybody calm. We did Google Docs how to build a story, how to build a chain, how to update certain things on our website. The problem with the office mostly is that people don't look at them, or they can't find it when the time comes, they're actually doing something, so we chime in and we walk them through it. But the docs are there for them if they go looking for them.

C: so it's fairly well documented, well laid out how to do everything is that accurate?

F: Yeah, and those are all like stored in like a central location on our Trello board which is another tool that we use in the newsroom to know the story lineup, there's one clip all about how people document, whether it's style guide, or a PTK how to. It's basically there may be information over here, my experience is like no matter how many documents you give people, they're not going to take the time to read them all. When you're launching a complete overhaul, you have more attention then if it's just a small feature.

C: How long ago did the complete overhaul take place?

F: I am going to say...it was...maybe spring of last year?

C: How long would you say it takes, at least in your experience in general to get up to speed after that change?

F: With any situation, you're going to have a spectrum of people that there are some that still can't write completely, they can't get all their keywords on, some people are just lazy, some people just don't have the time and they rush through it. So then we have to lock things down.

Now, you have to assign a vertical or you can't save it and publish it, because people just wouldn't do it, and that hampers your analytics, a lot of extra effort. Some people will pick it up, they're good at it, they get it. The good thing is that we all work so closely together, physically, they'll ask the person sitting next to them too. As long as you have a core people that are comfortable, and say good things about it, everybody starts to calm down and get through it. But with anything you're always going to have people that panic. But I would say, it was quick. This system that we have now is really intuitive, it's really easy to use. I would say within, you have people that did have the preview access, I wouldn't put time on it, but within 5 or 6 stories, things they've built they were comfortable with how it worked. There's always going to be hiccups, and you deal with them. But it was a really smooth rollout. We had to go through some pain points, not being able to do certain things in the beginning, but we still can't control the order of the bylines. So something like that, people really want it fixed, but they have to prioritize and that keeps falling down for more important things. You kind of have to live with somethings that aren't perfect.

C: So how are those priorities ranked? What are the driving principles to determine what is and what isn't important in terms of fixing things or implementing new things?

F: I would say that often editorial requests get overshadowed by business requests, basically if there's a revenue tied to something, a feature request, that would probably get priority over an edit request, and then functionality. A feature request is going to be a lower priority than them taking twice as long to get a story live because of this that and the other thing. They need to be able to do the things, so that we can push stuff out quickly. If it's hampering our ability to react quickly to breaking news, that's going to be at the top of the list, revenue is at the top of the list. Then the feature stuff comes later.

C: So you mentioned earlier, trying to sort of find workarounds, is there any specific examples, beyond what you'd said earlier about the documents, are there any, or could you maybe detail that process a little bit more, what you do in those situations? I'm especially interested in people that maybe aren't as well-versed with tech in general, or that system, I'm wondering how that sort of looks for them?

F: So another thing we run into, another reason why PTK is very limited, so I can't go in and just drop in an HTML coded table or chart or something like that. We can only insert certain things. That's why it's so specific, yes you can import a .PDF, but it has to be in document cloud, because that's what PTK would drop the link it, it's only going to accept the document cloud. The other thing we run into a lot is video. If someone sees a video on some local news channel, if often won't work with the video component that we have, so one work around we might do is try to find out if they tweeted it, so if the tweet has the video. Another workaround we can do is if

they have a screenshot of the video and embed the image, and then have a line of text beneath it that says, click here to watch the video. It's not the prettiest, but in certain circumstances, you just want to make sure people can find information. I really feel like we're limited in workarounds, because we're sort of locked down. We used to access to a snippet, and that was sort of like a capsule that we would use to set up a page, and open it up and we could dump HTML code in there. So we would be able to do a mid-page header that looked nicer than the ones that we had formatted, and now we don't have that, but we do have more options with visual headers in PTK. The problem with giving that kind of freedom, kind of being able to hack code into the page, is you lose style, you lose consistency throughout the site. I might put in blue font, but it should be black, but the designer of the website wants everything to be very consistent. What would happen is if we were keep stumbling upon, oh we need a way to do this, kathy or emma would have a discussion to get that to the top of the list, something we keep wanting to do but we can't.

C: So, was that reason that capsule feature was taken away, that consistency concern?

F: Yeah, and also it crashed the site a number of times if somebody puts messy code in there, it can create all sorts of problems, and it's kind of like finding a needle in a haystack at times, it's kind of like, which story has the bad code in it, especially now that we use a lot of xx, we have clipboard, msn, apple news, we have all these feeds that help us circulate our content more broadly, and a lot of those types of things prevent a story from appearing in the feed, because if the feed sees something it doesn't like, it'll just skip over it, and that's another reason to just have everything very controlled and contained, it makes the lives of the development team a lot easier to fix problems when they do arrive, because they know that can be ruled out, it's not an option now, you can rule that out. Everything is labeled and contained and in templates.

C: I imagine people, the less tech savvy someone is, the more difficult it would be to do something with HTML, because I know not everyone is tech savvy in the newsroom, so that makes sense. So would you say that the change has empowered the newsroom? Has it made it easier to report stories and things like that?

F: Yes. Absolutely. There was a time when, to report stories, like if there was breaking news, they would need to get a producer to push a story out, so the fact that whoever sees the breaking news can put a story together, find an editor and get the story out, that's probably half the time, sitting there with the story written, waiting for someone to produce it. So the ability to react to breaking news is much better now than it ever was. It's a luxury a lot of newsrooms can't afford to have xxx, but you kind of need somebody overlooking, proofreading, making sure in-line components aren't stacked on top of each other which makes a poor reading experience. A lot of people will publish a story, tweet it and move on with their next story. They're not looking at

across browsers, or on the phone, ideally you can look at the site that way, you can make it pleasurable viewing on multiple devices.

C: Is there, I imagine that mobile viewing has become to forefront for most news organizations. Was that something that was pretty prioritized when making this switch?

F: Yeah, we also can work in PTK from a phone, which is something we were never able to do before.

C: Very cool, does it have full features?

F: Not yet, but the ability to write, upload download, but lets say somebody died, we have an obit written ... (cuts out)

F: Let's say an entertainment writer interviews a celeb, and they have condense their interview to a reasonable length for the site. They can use this tool, so in a response that they had to edit down 3/4ths of what they said into a paragraph, they could say like, click here to read what so-and-so has to say about this, and it would be highlighted in yellow, and the user would click it and in that pop up window would be that big chunk of text, so that gave editors and writers the ability to not leave everything out of their stories but still keep them at a manageable length. But what they found was, I was looking through some stuff today in anticipation of our talk today, and I saw the annotation tool, and I thought, I haven't seen anyone using that in awhile. So I went looking and I found a story that had it, but it wasn't showing on the live site. So sure enough it was causing problems, so on android, our android users were having trouble using our site, so they narrowed it down to it being that component, so somehow that tool was, for people that run older androids, they were not able to view our site, so the decision was made, since editorial was not using the tool, rather than spending a lot of resources, they just killed it. And this is another thing that happens unfortunately. They dream up these ideas and they want something, the fancy new toy loses its shine and people stop using it.

C: That's very common I think.

F: Yeah, and also, so a story that's doing well may have been produced with not that many extras added to it, whether it be subheads, or links to other stories, so we monitor traffic and then may pick up on a story to make sure it has all those things, because we can't always get to every story. Communication isn't always great between development and the editorial vision, but I think that's one area that I think we are very fortunate here, our CEO and the developer, well the developer thinks differently, they're more code minded, maybe not as creative minded, in a conversation with a writer, they may not fully understand what they're talking about and then go

down a path of developing it and it's not what they wanted. Our system in place, we have a designer and we have Emma, who managed that thing (would meet) with that person whose idea it is, and then they would open it up to more people, say here's what we're doing, what do you like, what don't you like, and then take it from there. It doesn't just go down a path with a developer who may not envision it correctly, it goes through more rounds of previews in design and functionality before you get to, I think that helps a lot. We're very lucky we have a team that chats with the newsroom, I feel like it's something new here that there isn't so much disconnect with development and the newsroom.

C: I'm curious what your thoughts are on that problem with newsrooms that might not have the resource power, most news organizations don't have the luxury of having an inhouse designed system, having devs and designers in the same building. I'm wondering what avenues going forward for smaller newsrooms that have to outsource their CMS work, what maybe would make that easier.

F: I guess you just have to be super specific in your communication, both in what it looks like and how it should function. And take into consideration whether your users are looking at it on an iPhone or a desktop. We have a surprisingly large number of people that visit our homepage everyday. It's unusual that we have people that have it bookmarked and come visit our homepage. A lot of our traffic is generated from social and other sites that link to us coming in to the article page, but we do have a large number of people that come to our site to the homepage. That's a consideration that we make in a lot of decisions too, what would something look like from the home page, and you want to know, how many people you're talking about. Like those android users that couldn't see our site. You have to kind of make a decision based on how many people, how many people is that. Obviously you don't want to have people that literally can't view your sites. You have to kind of know that information, that when you're planning, when you're testing, seeing it through to all those different aspects of what you want to accomplish.

C: Has that made it more difficult with so many more platforms that people are viewing on, I'm sure that that is presented its own set of challenges, to make sure that everything is distributed correctly, as you said, you had problems with that one particular tool. You mentioned knowing that information, is that basically just understanding your demographic, your readership?

F: Yeah, we can see through analytics, what devices the majority of our readers are reading on, and can make decisions based on that. We have a lot of people, most people that will write in with problems, you'll see at the bottom of their complaint, sent from my iPad, and the thing is like, so many people have ipads, but maybe don't update their ios, so they might have a new ipad, but it's impossible to develop stuff, I can't even imagine what their up against with not only the different versions that people are running, but then the combination, are they looking at

our site in Safari, there's just so many possibilities that they're looking at our site in. I'm sure it's a very daunting task to nail as many of them as they can.

C: I can only imagine how difficult it is to account for all that ...But I think that pretty well hits on everything that I was trying to get at. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me and everything.

New York Times

These interviews took place in three separate group settings with multiple different actors.

T: Im thomas, I am a designer here at the scoop team and also a product owner for this thing called Oak, which is our rebooted story composition and editing tool. It's a project that trying to replace the old tool, which has been in use for xx... Oak is meant to be, whereas scoop was one editing line for both digital and print, inherited a lot of print production tools, Oak is is meant to be digital first composition and editor tool.

N: I'm Nathan, I've been working on our CMSes for like 10 years probably as a main part of my job. We been building what I called the sedimentary layers of the CMS over the course of my time. The initial problems resolve was the print newsroom in a separate newsroom in a separate building and publishes the print NYT and web producers can publish a version of that on NYT.com, and then we added a layer on top of that, we're like lets get editors in the print newsroom trained on how to use the CMS to actually publish breaking news themselves and then we added a layer onto that, well why don't we get everybody into the same system for both print and digital editing so articles running on a page in print now, do they integration between the digital CMS and print CMS, you're editing your print headline in scoop, and then a last layer is Oak, which thomas is talking about. Sort of taking away the model of there is sort of one master version of the story that's the same for print and digital and moving to this world where people are really free to create cool digital content and then there is a team called the print hub in the newsroom now that will figure out how to get that into print. So lots of change in like the essential purpose, like what is this system designed to do, who's it for. Over the years. It's always been publish the NYT, publish the digital NYT, but lots of change in how we goa bout that.

K: I'm Kellen, I lead the workflow team, which is a fairly new team or effort as part of scoop. What we do is help the newsroom manage content in aggregate, so if you're a desk, how do you not just create good stories using oak, and add great stories using photo tools, but how do you actually manage your entire report. Make sure that everything is in the place it needs to be, make sure it's budgeted and in a way that the wider newsroom, especially the different platforms we're promoting that content on, we'll be able to see it and budget it. So part of that is budgeting, part of that is the actual budgeting workflow, and so eventually we'll be creating some better fabric to actually hook some of things up to our platforms and manage how content moves from idea to edit, the whole way down the pipeline.

J: I'm Jenny, I'm a product designer for Scoop, I specifically focus on the photos team, so photos workflow.

C: Great well, thanks you all for agreeing to sit down and talk with. I have some guiding questions that I was planning on asking, but I'm really just interested in general in the whole scope of kind of what's going on here. So the first thing I could start with, I was interested in how the team was organized for the CMS. How is it set up, how the hierarchy is set up, how decisions kind of get made, and how and if the newsroom is involved in that process.

N: If we had four hours we could explain..

T: I think the headline is this is ever changing and incredibly complex. There's a platforms team which exists under the purview of this man, Matt Ericson who is on the masthead. Which is to say he's part of the newsroom. Within that platforms team, there is a subset of people called the Scoop team, that focuses on the core CMS tools. That Scoop team is composed of, like myself, including everyone in the room here, there's a product owner head or a product designer, and that team partners with the CMS team, which is a technology position which isn't part of the newsroom to actually build the tools. Because we work in some ways under the purview of Matt Ericson, we have some organizational connection to the newsroom, we ourselves have some connection to stakeholders in the newsroom. We also have a formal connection to a number of product organizations outside the newsroom which work on things like homepage, the mobile apps, various different products. The teams that build those products don't sit in the newsroom necessarily. But the identity of this platforms team as in the newsroom versus in a product organization has been the subject of a lot of conversation. For example, our titles including our product owners, my official title is actually assistant editor??? That's actually Kellens title, etc. it reflects that we are of the newsroom. Which is interesting but it creates some xxx.

C: when you say product owner, what does that exactly mean?

T: So in a traditional sort of product, you have roles like product owner, designer, agile coach engineers. Product owner is the person who defines what the goals of the product are, is responsible for making sure that business needs are being met through projects. Brings together design work, engineers, to actually prioritize working and executing to see a project through to the end.

X: We used to have, well have tons of stakeholders, but we didn't have product owners, so essentially, individuals in the newsrooms who wanted something done would go to developers who they knew and the developer would do that thing that an individual newsroom would ask for, it was basically anarchy. And it was also how do you build system that is efficient to use that

doesn't actually look at the needs of the whole newsroom that wasn't forward thinking in any way. So yeah, our job, we're supposed to be the single point of truth for a developer who wants to know what should I work on next Make sure that they're working on something that was valuable.

K: And working with designers and stakeholders to think about strategically across the experience, will mentioned the pieces not fitting well together. So not only are we focused on kind of organizationally in these areas of expertise, but we're also working with the folks with design specialty to think about how the workflow fits together with individual people and create a better vision for how the entire CMS functions as a whole so that folks are not having cognitive dissonance as they're moving from photo interfaces to homepage interfaces to planning interfaces. Very much a work in progress but something that we're exciting to be including the design team to help us do more.

X: there's been a lot just bottled on, just because of the size of the newsroom, 1400 people and the number of platforms that we're responsible for, like Kellen said, the sort of dissonance when you're moving between the system is really strong with all the editors in the newsroom. I think honestly, 4 or 5 years ago it just wasn't really as big of a deal. You didn't have as many people in the system you didn't have as many platforms, but now everything is exploding, with apple news and clipboard and twitter and facebook and snapchat ... xx, even on platforms we have...

K: Yeah, we have podcasts we have guides, we have morning and evening briefings. The newsroom is not just outputting to the newspaper in some monolith called digital. They're actually an incredible number of points that our journalism needs to reach, and managing that in a system that isn't customized to your needs is a herculean task. As we add more and more things we ask our editors to do every day as part of their workflow.

W: I've been using the phrase, I mean I don't like what the phrase CMS, because CMS conjures up a form that you put things in and then you hit publish and they get viewed on the website .The system that we're working on is much more of a workflow tool, like the actual story of data is relatively simple, but the question is how does that get made specifically around the newsroom, edited.

C: So in that same vein, when an editor wants, you mentioned that prior to maybe recently, when somebody wanted something a feature or whatever ,they would go and talk to a developer that they knew and try to get that implemented, so how does that process work now? If somebody wants to tell a story in a new way, or do something that CMS does not necessarily support, how does that conversation happen now?

N: I was going to toss to you, do you want to tell a story of an oak formatting issue or something like...

T: Yeah, might be easier to actually talk through this if I actually put something up on the screen so I might do that.

W: it certainly depends on the size of the request. It goes without saying..

K: We get work in in a lot of ways. People email us, people ask us for things, people ask questions, but we are also out in the newsroom looking for problems too, and trying to anticipate things that might be needed, trying to see opportunities in the way that people are working, and then as we look across the things people have asked for, the things that we think would make the newsroom work better in general, solutions to problems that we see or hear about, we start to prioritize that list of what would have the highest impact, what would make sense, are we making a change for one person or one desk, or is this a change or a need that scales to all the desks? Does it point us in the long term direction of the way we want people to be working or is it kind of a workaround in the short term, so weighing some of those different pieces of information that we can gather about the problem that is being proposed lets us know whether or not to pursue it.

T: So I think the two big sort of categories of things that we take in for requests are workflow problems or workflow opportunities to be solved, or storytelling design or story template elements that we can add to our abilities. The workflow opportunities tend not to be opportunities but tend to be things that people complain about. There's a channel, the entire newsroom uses slack, the entire slack channel uses a channel called newsroom help, where anyone that's having an issue in the building can write in with a bug report with some sort of difficulty that they're having, and there's a support team that assists them, and over time you collect reports about what bugs people are running into, where usability issues exist and we work with that support team to identify what opportunities are there. We also have our own ideas about what opportunities are there. So the system oak which is what I'm working on, we set out to build this two years ago, we didn't want it to move from a system where there was a save button to a model where there was not a save button, like google docs, so we're building out a section of this tool that looks like google docs, where you can have editors collaborate. So that's to say that in terms of workflow there are bug reports and usability issues that arise in the newsroom. Occasionally sort of a bigger idea, but not often, we have our own sense of what to work on. The other half is storytelling features. Another goal of this project OAK is to develop a better way to produce new story telling features. We have various text elements that exist, the actual sort of control of these elements, the design of them, is in the hands of the real facing product team, so we don't fortunately field requests like I want to make heading 1 look different,

that sort of thing is owned by a different team empowered to make that change. We wired things up so that if that team makes a change to the way something looks, that style change will just get sucked into the CMS automatically. The bigger lift that occasionally we need to make is when we want to add an entirely new type of element, so a couple months ago, we had a meeting with the multimedia team which owns video audio podcasts and they wanted to move the production of the article that's created for every mornings edition of the daily, they wanted to move this article from sort of a one-off custom template to our story platform. So that they needed to build this pretty cool media player that would sit at the top of the articles, so this is something that didn't exist previously, and we worked with them to build it into our core platform here so that any editor in the newsroom that knows how to use oak is able to add this to their story, specify and audio asset that corresponds with it and use that to produce a podcast page. It's still plenty of work on our side, but we're continually trying to make it easier for things like this to be created by teams that aren't use so we won't have to manage a long backlog of requests that extend our storytelling capabilities. Ideally we want a tool that requires less and less actual code in our tools to make something like this possible.

N: We should probably clarify that in the size of the NYT and complexity of the org, we tend to be the folks that people come to if they, if they ...things that they want to do effectively forever we'll always need to publish articles, articles are always going to need to have images, your people are always going to need to find articles to see who needs to edit them next, things like that, and if a reporter or an editor is like, I need a graphic with this story this afternoon, that's not our...just to clarify.

T: Yeah, so just to illustrate that, there was this really cool piece that was published this morning called this is 18, which is looks 18 year old women in our world, sort of document there daily life. There's a whole team of designers and technologists that build stuff like this, it's this little interactive path, there's this little slug that indicates.... And I think we'll be making stuff like this forever. And it's a question of, when is an element actually usable at a higher scale, when does it actually make sense to upgrade the platform.

C: That's something like that media player is a good example of something that was determined to be far reaching enough to go ahead and take the initiative to build that into the system then.

N: Yeah, it's paying off. The opinion editorial section just put out a podcast, and they're making use of the same, because this was built for them they were able to easily roll out a podcast page.

K: And some of that is because people in interested in telling certain kinds of stories, but I would say the other piece of the audio effort is a big institutional effort, we built a big audio team, we're hiring people that are experts in this kind of storytelling and we're moving toward a world

were this a pretty key strategic part of our work, and that's something that we're always kind of testing and weighing as well. We don't want to make decisions in the short term that are going to mean we're going to do a lot of work for something that won't pay off later, but we are paying attention to what the newsroom leadership and corporate leadership are trying to forward with their strategic goals and support those in terms of the story telling the newsroom is down too. So audio has become a pretty major newsroom effort, in terms our podcast selection in the past year ago.

C: when you talk about strategy, how is that strategy determined for your team, who is responsible for that, how long has the current operating strategy been going on?

W: when we're talking about the things that we're making big bets on which would be oak,. Story dashboard workflow too and photo management tools, those strategies, those projects have all been ramping up for a long time now. Oak is what, more than 2 years old? 3 years old, and it sort of started with they, it started with a hypothesis that we could have a tool that made it easier to make rich, create their own rich stories, and make it easy for platforms, because we're disconnected right? I don't know how blox works but a lot of CMSes both have the admin to input data and run the templating engine and display it, scoop only does input. People save things in scoop, hit publish, and that goes into another system which goes into another system which goes into another system which then hits our templating engine, and we have...three different templates, 4 different templating engine, we have the website, we have google amp, we have the apps, there's other stuff floating around, so it's very distributed. So there was a big organizational effort to make even small changes to how stories were going to be displayed. For oak we started play around with it awhile back, and tested out some of the core hypothesis and we said okay, there's something there. That sort of correlated with newsroom leadership desire to flatten out the newsroom and have it be less hierarchical, same thing with story dashboard, that corresponded with newsroom leadership wanting to reorg the newsroom in certain ways and us saying okay for that to be effective, we think we need new tools to make that happen. That's one component of it, trying to thread that line with where the masthead wants to go.

K: I think that is a key part. I think for us, there was a recognition within the last couple of years also that Scoop did so many different things and supported so many different efforts, we needed to take a step back and focus on the things that were the most important for the newsroom to do every day. Managing content, managing the visual report and then actually publishing, and then redoubling our efforts to make sure we were making those really essential behaviours and needs really clear. I would say that to me that really felt like a turning point within the strategy of this team and in our group to really still support all of the various special efforts, the needs to come to pass, the requests on our team from other teams, but how can we really be as dedicated as

possible to the thing that makes our journalism and our business unique. Just creating great content for people to read and subscribe to.

C: How does somebody in the newsroom go about learning how to use all of the tools available to them? What does that look like, is there something specific in place to make that learning process easier?

K: Well, it's sort of depends on the phase that folks are in. We do have an orientation program. When folks are hired newly to the NYT, they go through some, a couple of days at this point, of training, on Scoop and the toolset. That's a lot at once, when you don't know how things actually work, so you're absorbing the tools as a first look. You will continue to learn in action. We also have a training team that is part of the NYT. On big initiatives they will make a determination of how big efforts get rolled out, whether it's individual training to different desks, whether it's training otherwise. Thomas has been doing a lot of this with the Oak rollout, partnering really closely with those.

T: Yeah, the trick is that it's been a challenge to strike a balance between having a really carefully managed rollout process to the variety of desks and newsroom users in the building, balancing that with getting a newer tool in the hands of users and learning what works and what doesn't work. It's in our interest, obviously you want to build the best possible tools, but our POV is longer term. We want to invest in the right things now and then figure out where we want to be in 6 months 12 months, and that requires some risk taking. The training team, very understandably, wants to make it easy, and make sure that if they're training users, they have a rock solid workflow to recommend, best practices are ironed out, bugs are ironed out. So that's a challenge we continue to face.

C: How do you measure the success or failure of a different feature. You had said that you want to make sure you're placing your bets in the right places, so what the metrics for determining something like that.

T: To give you a concrete example, as part of the Oak rollout, the way that we proceeded so far, is to ask a desk to use Oak for as much storytelling as possible, so a newer desk is the climate desk. We asked them to start using oak a number of months ago. The hope is that they'll use oak for everything. The reality and expectation is that occasionally we need to use the existing tool for some things that oak can't quite do yet, or for workflows where maybe it's a fast moving news situation, that desk and any other desk, to work with like Washington, they know how to break news using the Scoop article app. They don't know how to break news using Oak yet. So you look at usage, Oak usage as a percentage of total articles created. These are numbers that I was just looking at. So far through the month of August, Oak usage as a percentage of total

articles was about 70 percent on that desk, one hypothesis that we've had, we're working on these google docs style collaborative editing workspaces and tools, is that if you allow people to work at the same time to write headlines, place art, view the story, that will allow the desk to work faster and more comfortably in breaking news situations. So after the climate desk started using these features, the percentage of stories they did using oak rose from 70% to 97%. So that was a validation of this being a successful of feature. That's one example, and it really varies from feature to feature. Some things are smaller, and it's harder to measure impact, some things are qualitative rather than easily quantifiable. So I think we're still trying to grab what sort of across the board metrics we can use to define success. But there are certain times, as with this example you can clearly illustrated.

K: We look to satisfaction a lot for our users. If we launch something new are they struggling to use it, are they expressing frustration and difficulty? And we're lucky that we're most of the product development team don't have there users a few steps away. So we do a lot of house calls and we talk to developers in a little, they often come with us. So we can often see the problem folks are having in real time. Folks who know us will send us messages, we try to do surveys to ask how people are feeling about the tools, the general health and happiness of our users is another input whether things are successful. My team uses a beta group to test out features. WE've got some savvy people in the building who are kind of, they won't be thrown off their game with a new feature or a change, so we ask them to try to use it. Before we roll it out widely and we use that exchange to understand how well it's working or not working. If we can tie things to data to see how the needle is moving, I think that's the best thing, but it's certainly not the only thing because, well we could probably optimize for fewer people touching an article or lower publish time, but that may not necessarily be the end goal that we want to reach, and that may have other kind of downsides, so being careful about the end goal that we want to incentivise is important to think about too.

T: We tend to identify newsroom users who we trust as feedback givers. I think that's tricky because you don't want to build a tool for a small subset of users. There's a real diversity with the familiarity with technology in the newsroom there's a real diversity of workflow preferences. There are certain people who are on our wavelength. We as a team like to think that we're digital natives, we're digital first. We have forward thing ideas about tools and workflows, and we each have users who can help us understand whether a tool we've built is successful with those values in mind. Whereas there are other users, well every bit of feedback is valuable but we're choosing feature aspects of the UI might be a little rougher, but that might not be the most critical feedback to an early stage.

C: I know that recently the whole homepage got changed, I was wondering if, well how much that affected the CMS, well if the CMS was part of that, and if that changed anything on taht side of things.

K: I worked on that on sort of both ends, so I can talk a little about that. The new homepage wasn't just a redesign, it was kind of a rethinking of our newsroom workflow to allow us to be able to spin up new sections, try some approaches that meant we could distribute workflows for the homepage a little bit differently so, workflow and tooling was a big part of that. We were able to use some systems that were already in existence to sort of build the first, first go at the newsroom workflow and supplement what we already had with, we have some other assistance tools that the CMS developers who worked on that project were able to build. Now that it's been in use through the testing period, I think we know what the next round of changes might look like to make that more stable. I think our approach there was definitely to set the vision for where we wanted to take the homepage, figure out a way to power it in a way that the newsroom would be confident in using. And we didn't build a whole new CMS system out of the gate before we knew whether the homepage concept was going to be successful but now we know that it already tested and launched, we have a good idea of what's working and what's not working, we're able to put plans in place to codify the things that work, and come up with better solutions to things that do. We're in pretty tight connection with our homepage editors . They're some of our closest colleagues and making sure that there needs are met is pretty key.

C: Another question that spills out of that one. When did this system begin? When did it start, and what did things look like before?

N: so we launched scoop in late june 2008. The project, the first thing we built in 2008 was an interface to what we called rank the homepage. Like what stories in what order. And we finally got rid of that interface with the product kelln was just talking about. That was one of the oldest parts of scoop. The homepage went through a couple of other iterations on the reader side in that period, but the way the tools were used on the news desk to build the homepage was the same. Scoop replaced a system that was essentially web producer friendly only. Like, I wouldn't even call it friendly. The way we madea homepage when i started at the company, you had to remember numeric codes if you wanted a certain story to display with a photo on the homepage, you had to put the number 51 in a field next to that slug. If you didn't remember, you changed the template to another thing that had three columns sometimes, and then the numbering scheme was different, you had to look this up on a cheat sheet all the time. If you wanted to edit an article, you were just editing HTML manually. Which had its pluses and minuses. That was accessible to 20 or 30 people maybe, back when the team was supporting it was essentially devops and nothing else. But would not work at all for the masses in the newsrooms to be using. Scoop started with that vision in mind, but it wasn't until 2010 or so that we got the first people

really editing stories in scoop. There was a lot to build there. People are used to microsoft word track changes and there spell check with there own dictionary and the ability to right click on a word and look up that word in the style book and all of that stuff.

C: You had said with the advent of this new platform Oak that now the print side of things is handled by, I forget what term you used, a specific desk that's responsible for making a product into the print hub.

T: when did the print hub come into existence, was that a year ago?

N: I think it's been longer than that. I think it's been between two and three but the work they have been doing has expanded recently.

T: It used to be the case that each desk was responsible for the editing of it's print pages. It is now the case that there are these print editing desks, print hubs. There's one that is associated with the features, there's another that is associated with the news desks, editorial still sort of operates the old way. The vision is that the respective desks focus solely on the digital report and operate on a digital rhythm. And then the print hub is sort of this passive receptor of these stories and they make decisions about what goes where and how to narrow it down to fit. I think the reality is pretty far from that vision. Editors on desks still have pretty strong opinions on how things look in print, they have strong opinions about if a piece comes in at 1500 words and they only have 1200 words of space in print, what are the 300 words that we're going to cut. They have really strong opinions about all that stuff. So I think we're still sort of molding into the print hub idea. But Oak enforces that pattern by separating interfaces. So a thing that you build in oak is a thing that will appear online and then certain people, not everybody has access to what's essentially a modified version of the old article editor, where you print specific editing...so if you a literally most newsroom users, you literally don't have permission to see the print editing interface. It's mostly worked. It's had its challenges for sure, and we're still not yet using this for the newsiest, fastest moving stories. And so it remains to be seen how it will support the story that breaks 30 minutes before the deadline, where it's very likely people would want to focus on the print presentation first to hit the print deadline and then come back and do more digital editing, so we'll see.

C: Something else that I wasn't familiar with before just a few minutes ago. So a story that goes into scoop is then distributed out multiple different platforms. How does something new get added to that distribution?

N: So it's gotten better . A couple years ago we were organized by platform, meaning there was a team that made the android app, a team that made the iphone app. The ipad app was a different

app, same team different app, different teams for the mobile website, and the desktop website and all of this grew up organically with the rise of mobile, and one of our company strategies for a while was explicitly called NYT everywhere, where you have of these dev teams everywhere to put the news content on these platforms. But that made it onerous to add anything new, because you had to coordinate all of these different teams working on other things in order to add any storytelling capabilities. Although we do still have the situation like the exact code that renders what a story looks like on the iphone or android app and what a story looks like on the website and what a story looks like in AMP, those are all somewhat codebases, at least the same set of people work on them now, so there's more ability to say there is essentially that is called the story team that can make some of those changes. I don't think we're where we want to be at all, but it's gotten a lot better a couple of years ago.

T: A related thing there is a couple of years ago we moved as a company toward a single canonical content schema and single shared way of publishing content and then sort of reading content on various platforms, but the previous world that we were in involved all of these distinct CMSes with all of their own formats for publishing content, their own APIs, it created a lot of confusion and difficulty So the model we are moving toward is if a new apple news like platform was born into existence and had a new proprietary rendering format ... we at least have a model of publishing an NYT article into this canonical pipeline ... it's no longer the case that they have to figure out this tangle of systems and divert content to whatever this new platform is. We're sort of marching toward a new model based on this rationale.

N: Journalists had to do these ridiculous hacks a few years ago. Kellen can help me get this not the incorrect statement. We had to do these things like, some mobile platform would not read photos of a certain size, you had to put them in the article the second time in a different way for them to show up, but it was like, I'm a journalist, I just want this photo in my article. But you had to jump through these hoops based on what was supported.

K: I heard someone who has been around for awhile who was an editor in London say that production, web production getting things filled out at the NYT is an oral tradition. Which I think in the past has been more true. You really had to have accurate knowledge of very specific execution and outcome to understand which crop you had to override to get the android app to show this picture, and there were a few people that were masters of that kind of knowledge that were sort of everybody's go tos but it was not scalable as you do more and more stuff. Taking all of that specialized knowledge and creating systems that are a little bit more, as Thomas likes to say, what you see is what you mean which is one of my favorite phrases for what oak does. You should be able to do a thing and have high expectations that it will output on the right way on the other end and not be guessing about what field you had failed to hack incorrectly to get nice

rendering. Some of that is building trust too, with our tooling, that we're not in a position of hackery anymore.

C: One more thing that I could I ask before I move on, what sort of methods are in place to ensure that somebody sits down to type a story out ...

K: Yea why don't we talk a bit about that a we talk. I think that there's sort of a couple of ways. You saw Oak a second ago, the different xx there resemble ...but we also have individuals that render ... on platform, once you get off platform it's a little dodgier, there are various tools that are made by places like FB and Google and stuff like that. But ideally people are populating all the fields that they're supposed to be populating and people have .. but kind of a hi fidelity...

(chatter as we change rooms to talk from product to developer, setting up for a new conversation)

Developer talk starts here.

A: I'm a dev on the workflow team, working on some workflow management tools for the newsroom.

D: I work on the editor it's called oak its' what people use to write articles in scoop. So there was an old article interface, this is sort of the new one that has more features and different schema for the article. We worked on project M?

K: we haven't talked about that. I asked angela and dillon in particular, because they worked on a project with me last summer, I can't believe it's been a year, where we actually did some prototyping with the newsroom and sort of a shorter term project with them participating, and learn from them, which has kind of turned into the workflow project that we have now. So that's, we've got the canonical way we work with the newsroom and the dev team is involved but also we've done some experiments that have been pretty fun. I'll see if I can...neither of you have the ...

(Chatter as she sets up demonstration)

K: this is what users see when the come into scoop. It's not glamorous, this is on our hitlist to clean up a bit. This is kind of looking into the past at what folks needed at their disposal. They get a search tool and some tooling that shows them recent articles that they worked on, and they can see recent articles that they worked on and what articles were assigned to them. Then our really key interfaces are off to the left. So this is stroy dashboard the tool that angela worked on,

why don't we pick business... Styles is not one of our best desks, they don't work in scoop as much as we'd like them too. So this one of the tools that editors, when they create stories, they can manage assignments to them, they can leave notes for each other, they've got a high level view of what the piece of content is, and if you click into these you can go a little deeper and see information about where the story has been promoted and then you've got a responsive feature in the right corner. So this feature isn't really meant for people who are going in and changing the words in the story, but people that might need to coordinate it, to make sure it's at the point where it should be. Can quickly see that the art is done, and this works for public articles, but also articles that are in progress, so you can see really on, if an article isn't really... if someone is promising something for this afternoon and there's no text in here, if you're the print editor or the homepage editor and you've been promised this, this tool can be helpful for starting to ring your alarm bells that things are not as far along as you want them to. So seeing that work has been done and also seeing that work has not been done are things that are handy in here. That's story dash. So can we look at the old article UI? So you saw a little bit of oak from thomas, which is the new article interface that we're kind of excited about, but here's sort of the old one. So this were people used to compose their articles, you can see it's much less friendly, so much more role based, which is something that's really tough, the reason that this was set up this way is so that the producer can go into the editing tab, while the editor is editor, while the reconciler can go into the reconciling tab. As our jobs became sort of more hybridized, a digital editor is also thinking about photo, we don't quite have a process that is so tightly tied to people jobs, so oak is a world that supports more collab and more blurriness in the jobs that people do. It really invites you to write a story and create a story. You're not confronted with fill out all this metadata, you're confronted with create really nice journalism. Those are sort of the things we've been talking about over the past year.

K: staging is also our dev environment too, so sometimes we break things.

C: So when you're working on something on oak, you'd said that things are getting more blurred together, as far as what they do, when you first start working on this, when you sat down and started talking to people, what's that conversation sound like? What was the goal you were pursuing.

D: So that's a question about what users asked for and so on, something that I didn't experience much, I wasn't on the team for one hand ... from a tech perspective, the goal of oak was to make changes and updates to the article more sustainable, so if we're adding a new image type that has a different treatment on the website, it can happen really fast, and it can also happen really seamlessly for the user. So you can see what's actually going to be on the website or really close, they don't have to, we don't have to have a lot of teams spending months on making that work. Kellen could speak more to the user feedback that lead to oak?

K: I was also not involved in oak early on but I think it grew out of a few of the different things we talked about before. One of which is how do we create something that is in line with the way people actually are working and the way that we want them to work, create really good journalism that is more visual. It also grew out of experiments that the interactive news team started to do. They're the ones that made that 18...thing we were viewing early. Often the things that they are working on are these bespoke custom tools and that takes a lot of effort, a lot of time a lot of testing on all those platforms, but it can be a great place to seed ideas that we want to bake into the CMS later, so sometimes they are working on things that are sort of a trial balloon. A major...as far as I know in Oaks oral history, a major reason we decided to build oak was a tool called listy that they developed, which was in the middle of the buzzfeed listicle making boom. You could have probably made a listicle in our article CMS, like our old article template, but when you're confronted with a traditional article format, you're more likely to just write a traditional article, and creating an interactive bespoke tool that interactive news created that just gave you the listee format, helped people get their feet wet in writing in that style and guided them into this other format and it took off like wildfire, all the sudden you're writing, you're publishing tons of listees, one might say too many listees. But that sort of, I think got us into thinking the form and the tool that you're making can sort of shape the content, and we proved that it worked. It had become so well adopted that we thought it should move from this temporary space that interactive news was supporting into the real CMS. I think the strategy, the conversation on the ground and then what people are actually doing and those trial balloons are all things that have driven us.

D: Yeah, and to piggyback on that, one of the ways that they're rolling oak out is by having editors and reporters create these new non-traditional story forms in oak, so things like lists or we have these templates, we call them patterns, like Q&A, there's a specific set of elements that you combine to create this article type. You have a question and an answer, or you have an annotated document, so you have a piece of a document, you have a header and

...

1:58:40

C: so I basically just have a few questions about that.

1: So I'm the other side of that, I'm a user. I'm a planning editor in culture. So that's a fancy way of saying I'm an air traffic control comp for about 150 URLs a week or so. So some of what

I do is to help make sure that people who don't feel that they know how to use tools can get that people who know how to train them

C: When there's something in the newsroom that people want to have happen, how do you communicate that to the development side of things, and what does that look like?

1: The good thing is that product is often asking questions before things are being built. As they are being built you can certainly worm your way into little beta groups to test things. I try to be nosey about that. I try to find out where I can get involved, even if I don't know how to use the tool, just so that...we're like the canary in the coal mine, we can figure out what's coming and evangelize partly, what the program is and what the capabilities are. That's one thing, being involved in those small groups, sometimes it is as easy as a Slack message or an email message. Knowing the right party. The other part of that is asking and interviewing how people will use it, and if we hit stumbling blocks, we'll make a google doc and we'll be like hey, here are some things that we are struggling with and that doc can be a way to communicate for instance with our oak, we have a google doc that is like, here are things that we would love to have, here are things that culture doesn't understand or doesn't like about it, here are things that would seem like.. People can then respond to that, people can ignore that, people can say these are priorities, that's a way people can communicate.

C: So what about when a problem arises? You'd said that if someone doesn't know how to use something, or there's an issue where you thought this was how it was going to go down, but it didn't exactly work that way, what happens in those situations?

1: It's kind of like the emergency ... where you put a slack message in the newsroom help channel and you get immediate help. It's the 'i broke something can you fix it.' and somebody else fixes it for you, and sometimes there are the longer things were we just have concerns, and it's in the google doc, and you set some goals and maybe a few months later you make progress on them. Those are kind of the two tracks I think. There are also some things that we work through ourselves. We find things that maybe everyone else in the room knows about, but since the newsroom is so large, we make the mistake ourselves and then work our way out of it. So some of it is just talking with editors in the room, usually there are a couple power users in the room on whatever program it is that can help.

C: So I had found that a lot of newsroom practices are shaped by the community of users, you had mentioned that there are certain people who are very well versed in certain things, does that kind of just, do those people evolve naturally out of experience, and how do you facilitate and direct those people to them?

1: I wonder if those people get annoyed because everyone comes to them, there are some people that are hired here and they sort of come in knowing how to use stuff, and there are some people here that maybe they were here when it was all dead trees and all print and they taught themselves, so it's a mix. I think you just sort of know the people when you see them and you just tend to rely on them. There are people that sit near them and pick up stuff.

2: Seems like, you know I've been sort of a person in the past, I don't know as much any more I actually left the company and came back, it's been awhile since I've been really working on the team that Kellen is on now, so I don't know anything anymore so people don't come to me all that often anymore with questions, but they used to, I used to be one of those people who was like the go to person for a bunch of people in the newsroom, it was very organic in that way. My go to people who are sort of my friends from having worked on stuff, so nathan xxx, I don't know if you'd had a chance to meet him, but he's sort of a genius at all this stuff, we worked together very closely in the past. There have been times, when I don't think this is the case anymore but where there were certain systems that were running off of his desktop computer he had at his desk, so people get to know their go tos. I'm sure there are some people in the building who don't have a go to, but then this, newsroom help slack channel, what did it used to be called? It used to be called scoop help, and now it's just been broadened to newsroom help, now that we have two different names for our CMS and all sorts of things and they do other things that aren't CMS related, but that's kind of a good innovation, I feel like there just wasn't that kind of general area to go to before Slack existed, but now people can just go there and ask questions.

1: almost any problem can be solved.

2: yea I don't know exactly how, I don't know what the body count is, what the staffing is for that channel, but there are some people, it's basically there job to be in that channel to help people with everything that arises.

C: It can be difficult to get people to let go of their old habits. How does that work here, are people unsatisfied with that and if they are, how do you bridge that?

1: It took forever to get people into scoop. And just as people started getting into it, especially some of the older writers, who are working in it, getting comfortable with it, Oak started to roll out. So part of it is just, it's hard to keep a lot of tools and tricks in your head so people don't always have the brainspace. The other thing is, there was kind of a rollout going on, then it just sort of stopped, for a number of reasons. To the point of it's being done on individual story... where certain groups of writers and editors are working with the transition to work on oak, so it's sort of slowed that process down. It's probably better that way, because really oak is a

philosophy too. So you can't just say to the entire newsroom, change everything about how you frame stories overnight. So from my perspective, doing that on a story individually means people can get intense focus and training and can really think about it in a different way, so in some ways that's better. The problem is you have two systems, and some are really really on, and some aren't, and that holds the entire room back in some ways.

2: yea it's a good thing to mention the digital transition team. Is it still called the digital transition team or is it called the digital training team? I'm sure that of the DTT, is a godsend for the people that are working on developing the CMS, because they don't also have to serve as trainers, to be on the sort of team who are training individuals.

C: So there is a specific group of people that get people acclimated to the stuff in the newsroom?

Mic 1

C: So what do you do at Mic?

D: Pretty much everything, so both, so working on the CMS and it's tools as well as our site or, sometimes we're doing apps or other distributive platforms. We basically jump in and do whatever necessary to get the job done. Now I lead the team technically so I'm responsible for leading tech discussions and making sure we make the right decisions both when it comes to back end and front end questions.

C: Great, so that is a pretty good lead in. How is the team set up there, organizationally, you say you're responsible for making sure the right decisions are made, how do those decisions shake out, and what do those conversations generally sound like, for making bigger decisions dealing with CMS stuff?

D: That's a good question. It's very, it's also one of those things that have changed a lot. When I came in 4 years ago, we didn't have a process really at all, but I and my colleagues have worked for years to build it out, a process to just make sort of gut decisions about everything, but to actually make the right decisions based on data and stuff like that. When it comes to the CMS specifically, we do try to talk as much as we can with editorial and see what their needs are. So I work remotely from Sweden, so I'm not in as close contact with the editorial side as perhaps someone sitting in the office.

C: so are there people with your team that do work in that office?

D: Yes, pretty much the rest of the team is in the office actually. We used to be more remote, but now it's basically just me left. And the other person is moving to New York in just a few weeks, so then it will just be me working remotely. But whenever I'm in the office, I'm there every second or third month, I try to talk as much as I can with people on editorial with what their needs are, and how we can help them out more. There's been like a few projects over the years that I feel have been really sort of hitting the right way to collaborate between editorial and product team. There was one project, it was probably three years ago now, it just randomly happened that someone from product was talking to someone from editorial, that was someone on editorial that was technically inclined, so they were like digging around in the data database and figuring out which articles were shared on social most, so what we did is we looked at the type of queries she was running in the database and built a product out of that, so that anyone without a technical knowledge could use that within the CMS.

C: so that was like a metric to measure how the stories were performing on social?

D: Yes.

C: When you attempt to gather that data from the newsroom, are their scheduled meetings that happen, you say, sorry how often did you say you're in New York?

D: Every second or third month.

C: So I'm assuming that there are some time...is there time set aside to meet with editorial? Do they sort of bring their concerns all at once, or does that trickle in organically as time goes on?

D: I don't really have a process for that right now. I schedule meetings when I'm in the office, try to get like informal coffee with people and see what they're annoyed about and see what kind of projects I could make out of that. Everyone else, we're working on building that out a little bit more with a team that's in the office. So like having regular meetings and making sure that comes in in a more structured way. Honestly, the place we get the most feedback is we have a bugs channel in slack, where people are just like this is not working and we turn that into tasks. That's for things that are actually not working, but sometimes it's like this is annoying, can we do something about that?

C: That's actually one of my questions I was curious how, if there are issues or problems that arise, how do those get hashed out. It seems like it's pretty common with a lot of people that I talk to that there's kind of like a slack channel that's set up specifically for that, so I'm curious if you have any examples that you could provide of problems that have happened that have been resolved or anything like that.

D: Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, we had an actual bug just the other week. We had a system where you can get old versions of the article you're editing so you can refer back to change, and that just stopped working, so someone was just like, hey I'm trying to access this and it's not working, so that's like a recent actual bug that we fixed. Then there's also been other things, that are more like annoyances. So since it's an editor that has the article in it, there's a lot of functionality on top of that. So like links in the article for example, you need to be able to click and highlight the link to edit it, but you also want to be able to open that link in a new window very easily. That's functionality we had to go a little bit back and forth with editorial to find how comfortable you were with using key shortcuts and pressing command and using your mouse to open to the link, to find what works for them. Something that started in the bugs channel but moved it the bugs channel.

C: Some newsroom users are more tech savvy with others, something that I've found in talking in other groups, is these super users, that are much more comfortable with the tech in place, how does it work when somebody is not super tech savvy? How do people get acclimated to the system?

D: I think a part of the process I haven't been involved with a lot. The only part of that I would see, is someone that's confused by reports that I have trouble sorting out myself, because the person isn't able to formulate the question in a way that I as a tech savvy person understands, so it's like we're not able to communicate, but it mostly works fine I think. We have some documentation that says how this is how that works, this is the process on the tutorial side, but it's not something that I'm part of a lot.

C: Something I didn't ask at the start of the conversation, what CMS is in place? Is it something that was designed in-house by developers at Mic?

D: (nods) yeah, the CMS is many parts. The biggest part of it is the article editor, which is written with graphs, which is facebook's text editor tool, and react, and then we have other parts for analytics and data and stuff like that. We have xxx framework that we use, we've written some plugins for it that make it work for us better, but the CMS as a whole does not have a name. Like different parts of it have had names in different periods of time, but usually we just refer to it as article editor and analytics tool, things like that.

C: So have there been any recent additions to that system, within the past year or so that were notable? That were successful I guess?

D: So I think the biggest addition was we started using xx API, I'm not sure how technically familiar you are

C: I'm not super tech savvy, it's not my background.

D: It's an API to our database, essentially. One issue that we've been having for awhile is that there are certain needs, when people need to look or update directly in the database, which can of course be a security concern, even when you have restrictions, to do that. But we've been having a lot of that access is security concerns, so we wanted to fix that, so we set up a very simple way you could very easily, for anything that we had in the API, you could add a table, add new rows to the database and edit anything that was in there, lists and filters and all these things, so using a react framework ,we built out a tool that made it very easy to set that up with our API, so that as soon as someone needs to update something, instead of having them go directly in the database, they can now use this new thing we built out. I think that's the biggest one.

C: so on the flipside, talking to the newsroom or the editorial team, are there any hot button or sort of issues that they have, or frequent things they wish for different, how do they communicate that, beyond the bugs channel, do people come and say, I don't like this particular feature, and this is what I like to do. Not everyone is tech savvy enough to communicate that sort of thing, that's sort of the meat and potatoes of what I'm trying to get at is that language can be difficult, so I was wondering how that looks at Mic.

D: So what I've found is that when I talk to directly to people, they have a lot of feedback, they're like oh I'm doing this crazy thing to work around this bug or something like that, but it's things that aren't surfaced, so we're trying to build out a better process for it so these things come to us, but a lot of these things we don't even know about. So they're very vocal about it when we ask them directly, but there's no real good channels for it to come to use directly. But they're also very good at being creative and working around things that are perhaps based around an old process of doing things or things that are just buggy.

C: unrelated contact requests. Something else I wanted to ask about, as far as story forms, are there things that are sort of viewed as higher priority, as far as video, within the CMS, as far as its capabilities, as far as where your team is focusing it's direction.

D: yeah, so since we're a small team, there's not always someone actually working on the CMS. A lot of times it's just running and doing its thing. It's a little bit like, the company as a whole is very focused on video, but a lot of the video handling, we have outsourced to other companies, so we're not actually handling video, other than embedding it in articles and things like that. So, our CMS is more focused on the written side.

C: what about like, after a story has been completed, what is like the archiving process? I'm assuming that there is some kind of storage that goes on after things that have been completed, how easy is that for people to go, is there like a system that exists for people to go back for people to pull stuff from that and reuse in future stories, and how easy is that for the newsroom to use.

D: I'm not sure what there process is, that's actually something I think they're asking for which is a better search functionality for our internal, for our archive, we have very limited search functionality today, that's something they're asking for, but other than that there's no sort of process for using old things

C: I was wondering, so what does from start to finish, is it possible for you to sort of sketch out, if someone is like, I want this new feature, we're going to do this new feature, what's the step-by-step, what's the timeframe for that, what the individual steps would sort of look like?

D: yeah, so it probably sort of varies a lot how this actually looks, but say we get a request through the slack channel, or hear about a request some other way from say editorial, the process that we would try to follow is first just follow up with more questions, to get as much information about what they want as possible, because people have a tendency to put requirements that are like we need exactly this, but they're not actually phrasing what the problem they're trying to solve, but they're actually writing out the feature, I believe that we have engineer and PMS and designers, know what problems they're trying to solve, we're going to make a better job, so trying to figure out the problem they want to solve and what problem they're having, and then also double checking with our sales department, and checking to see if there's something that they would be interested in, because if there are more departments that have a need for this feature, we'll prioritize it higher. That would be the next step. After that we would have a PM, assign a PM to the project that would formalize requirements, do research if necessary, potentially, if there's a need for it, involve a designer to make a few design iterations each project also have stakeholders, depending on who asked for the feature, who will be depending on it, so we check in with those, with them and make sure that everything that makes sense, and then depending on how much we have going on at the time, we try to slot it in as it makes sense with other priorities and kick it out for engineering to actually implement it. And then how long that goes on how much xx is needed really depends on the scope.

C: Great, well I think that hits on all the things that I was going to ask as far as the questions go, I was curious what like big projects, where the initiative is focused for your team going forward?

D: IT's definitely always changing. So that's the interesting and the hard part, It sounds like it's stamp, it's like similar to IG stories and snapchat stories, tap through, but on the web. We actually built out a CMS feature for that, to build out these tap through stories, we were partnering with google to build that out, and I think now it's coming to search pretty soon. WE have a few things in there to add, just tweaks to use the latest version of stamp, to make sure we can use it at its fullest potential. We're looking to converting to different formats. I think that overall that's something that we're always looking out for. The new changes quickly, so to be able to be on new platforms quickly. We have actually an open source format, it started for articles it's called article JSON, which we use, from the article editor, we turn the text into a JSON blob, which we can easily turn into a apple news format, or facebook instant article or other platforms that we push to and we have something similar for stamp, xxxx, you can potentially convert to video or something like that.

C: So when you say you made that a CMS feature, does that mean that essentially that's going to be integrated, so that somebody can easily add stories that can easily populate that feature?

D: Yeah it's similar to articles, it's slides of text that you put together in a series and you publish those.

C: Great. Thanks again for talking with me! (relevant info ends here)

Mic 2

C: So if you just want to talk a little bit about your position there?

R: Yeah, so I'm a fellow on the product team. Basically product serves all departments across mic, so not only editorial but also sales and the business side and Mic leadership, so they kind of sit at the intersection of everyone and make sure that all our digital products are meeting the needs of everybody. But what I'm doing specifically on that team are 3 things. I'm heading or IG revamp. Our IG account was something Mic wasn't really using at all when I started, so I worked with our audience team and basically kind of orchestrated the strategy of actually posting regularly on there and what that would look like. In addition to that a daily news product, so working between the audience team, which works primarily on social and audience engagement and editorial and product on creating this product that would tell you the news you would need to know for the day through diverse perspectives.

C: Which is what you showed in class.

R: And that's a cross platform product. Eventually it will be viewed on IG, FB, AN and our App. So that, heading the strategy and design and UX on that. And the third thing, I'm working with editorial to create interactive content for them. So a lot of the reporters that work for Mic primarily are either have strong skills in video or writing. So we have tons and tons of articles that are pushed out every day, and we also have a daily snapchat show, we have a FB show that is published three times a week, so we have very large teams that are dedicated to those video teams in particular. So, when it comes to interactive content for stories, there's like hardly any of that, so kind of what I'm doing, for the midterm specifically, working on some pieces on creating data visualization graphics. I have the skills to not only be a traditional journalist to do the research and reporting for that, But I also know how to do the visualization for that type of product. I'm working with product and the developers to make sure that it looks okay and is responsive on multiple devices, also with our editors so that it makes sense with the voice of Mic and all that jazz. So those are kind of the three main things im working on right now. So it's like IG social strategy, a daily news product and then interactive editorial content.

C: So when you sat down to put together the interactive news product, you had mentioned you had to take input from a lot of different people, so how did that process work out, and what did that look like?

R: For the daily news piece, what I had to do first was to figure out how exactly are we going to decide what news gets shared every day, because like I'm a fellow and I'm a temporary employee, I had to look to who in the newsroom is doing something or would be a good point

person to decide what news of the day should be told. There was already a person on the social team making a newsletter, and it was called Mic daily, and it was five stories you need to know of the day. It was a good representation of, like heavy on the politics side, heavy on the stories that were unique to mic, very diverse stories that you wouldn't necessarily hear from like the NYC. So because of lack of Bandwidth within Mic, because so many people are doing so much within their jobs, there isn't a whole lot of room to ask somebody to take on a lot more, so it made sense to take that daily news newsletter and just use the content that's being produced through that and making that visual, so we don't have to have another person decide what news of the day we should be telling, because we were already doing that for a newsletter, so that was the first step, figuring out what exact content we should be doing. So this guy tim, who is a social media editor, was going to be the person who is going to be creating this every day. The next step was to decide how exactly that was going to look. So what is the structure, is it going to be five stories a day, is it going to be 2, or 3. We ended up deciding on 5, because we think there's so much happening everyday, we think that's a good representation of what's happening without overwhelming our audience. So we had to kind of talk with our senior product designer, as well as people who are on the brand and audience team, and people on editorial about their thoughts about how many stories we should share and how in depth we should go on those stories. We ended up deciding on 5 stories and then two sort of pieces per story, that way you have a headline and you have a little bit more information for that piece. What we noticed within our competition, because a lot of this project was also competition analysis, seeing how other newsrooms were doing daily news, on instagram specifically, and what a lot of organizations would do is they would just post a picture with a headline and a swipe up link, sometimes it would be very vague what the story was about, what we noticed, was the amount of people who actually look at something on IG versus people who actually click the link, the percentage is so small. I don't know what it is off the top of my head, but it's so so minimal, so to meet people where they're at, we want to give them the gist of what they need to know in two cards so if they weren't to swipe up, we ideally would like them to, but kind of balancing that need for people to go to our website, but also knowing that's not the way people consume news anymore. They're on those platforms for a reason, that's the way they like to consume information, so we kind of had to find the balance there. That was a lot of meetings and conversations with different people with a lot of different expertise, then we had to decide how will people know which story they're on within that piece, so you have like 5 stories, 2 cards for each story, how do they know which story they're on. Then we had to conceptualize which type movement of animation would be simple enough but not too complicated to indicate when something was stopping and starting. I had to talk with motion graphic designers on our snapchat team, because we had to do a lot of animation for that piece specifically, but then also talk to our senior product designer on the product team. Just getting lots of feedback about what is aesthetically most effective and then just getting general feedback from people around the office. There's a lot of internal testing. We went through 5 prototypes. All prototypes were made from scratch. The goal of this piece is to

make it through this CMS tool that we have called story CMS. Story CMS makes it possible to create a tap through video experience without any design or video editing experience at all. That's what makes it brilliant for Mic, because you have our snapchat team editors and our facebook team editors are so overwhelmed with what they have to do for their show to animate or video edit for something like this. So this tool is perfect for our audience team who focuses on social media and products, and since this daily news piece is going to be on social media and our website, they're the ideal people to make this. With the tool you can make it such a small amount of time, versus what you'd have to do with multiple people. So I have the skills to make it from scratch, so that's kind of what we did. I was in charge of the strategy, the graphic design, the animation, the video design for all of it, and so we did 5 prototypes and I would tweak all those things within adobe suite products basically. What our snapchat and facebook teams use for their products. Then once we got to the 5th product, which was something everyone on audience, editorial and product was happy with, the people within Mic leadership signed off on, and then when we got positive feedback from non-media users, that's when we were like okay that's what we want this product to look like, now we're going to make the changes in the code and the CMS. The reason we didn't make the changes to the code and the CMS first was because there would be so much more work to be done with multiple people to get that to be tweaked and changed for each prototype, it was just much easier for me as one person to make the changes within adobe.

C: So when you say tweak the code within the CMS, is that, now is that integrated as a feature, is that up and going so someone can come in and be like, snappity snap quick like.

R: So it's not done quite yet, but that's where it's headed. A developer has been officially designed for making those changes, and now that we've been through 5 prototypes and know what needs to be changed, after midterms is over I'm going to be starting to work with her.

C: So when you say changed, was it changing something that was there before that kind of facilitated that?

R: Yes, and also some new things that it didn't have. There are some design features within the CMS which weren't effective, so the CMS story tool, specifically has a little mobile shaped screen for each page in the trap through story. The first screen there's a little dropdown menu where you can choose a template, and there are all this little coded templates to make it look like you want, and so there default template is the one that you use for like regular text, so like a non-headline and it was a gradient and white text, but the gradient was not dark enough for any type of photo, so if you used a photo that was too bright or too much white was in it, you couldn't read the text, so it made it, it would add even more work for the audience team, because they would not be able to choose the best photo for the story, they would also have to take into

consideration what's dark enough, and that's not something you should have to think about. Through testing and stuff we basically changed the design to not be a gradient but to be this box that was like 85% opacity, much much much darker, and also its lifted up the screen so it's listed above the screen so that it's above the buttons on IG, so it's responsive to actual social media and also you can actually read it. It's one of the big things that some of the designing is going to be changed, also it had no animation capabilities. It had 1 animation capability, sorry. You could upload a photo and add a KEn Burns effect to it, that would make it shift, but that was it. One of things we created on the prototype so you would know where you're at on the 5 stories, you would have when a story is beginning because you would have all these different colored lines that would shift this way and swipe open to the photo and the text, so when you know something would be starting. Then the second card would happen, and then once that card was done, all those lines would fall and cover the entire screen, next story they would swipe across. It was a very smooth movement of we're done, starting a new story. There isn't a way to add that in the CMS because you would literally have to bake that into the video you would upload, but it wasn't effective, because when you would upload videos in the CMS, they're the very bottom layer, and the text layer is on top of it, so you'd have animations and then the text would be on top of everything. So you would have to add another layer in the code for the animation, so that's something that we have to add that's completely new. Then the third thing that we have to add, there's no way to upload audio only, so the majority of this daily news piece, most of the visuals are static images that you add a little bit of movement too with the Ken Burns effect, but when you upload any sort of movement even if it's not a video it's just a moving image, it's still a video file on IG, and when users watch that on IG they expect some sound, so the biggest feedback we got on our 4th prototype before our 5th was that people really wanted some sort of background music, and the only way you can really do that without having actual audio editing skills, so you don't have adobe audition for example, you have to be able to do that in the CMS tool, and there's no way to do that right now, so you have to be able upload a .wav file, or an .mp4 file. So that's, the animation and the music those are things we have to add that will probably be the most work outside of the design change. There's a little bit of design tweaking, but there's also a decent amount of change that actually haven't been there before on this tool.

C: Are these features that are getting added, will they be able to add to anything outside of this particular platform, it sounds like you'd want to have the ability to upload .wav files into your CMS for other things in the future.

R: I don't know but it seems like it would be useful. I'm not sure within our regular CMS, I'm just now starting to use our normal CMS for the editorial stuff.

C: So this is just for the stories feature, got it.

R: With the story CMS tool though, you can upload, so right now, in regards to exporting, this another thing that needs to change, the only area that it can export to is the website, because it's connected directly to our website but there's no function for it to directly export as video files that you can upload to IG, so that's another feature that they have to code, which is like exporting each of these pages as individual .mp4 files, and then they have to have a way to export all of these pages as one combined .mp4 video file, because apple news, their video on their app does not support tap through, it has to be a full video. We get a fourth of our readers from Apple news, so it's a place where we need to put out content, but because they don't support that, our audience members would have to take each of those individual video files and put them together in premiere, or something. And the whole goal is for them to not have to touch any video editing tool at all. They should be able to do it in the CMS, and that's it. So that's kind of like what needs to be changed.

C: It's interesting that you mention that because I find that more and more platforms that start to exist, the more and more requirements that those individual tools have to meet. I think that's interesting. What all platforms will this be going to in the future? IG, FB, because FB supports tap through stories now, because our website, because google has this format called AMP stories, where you can create tap through stories for your website, so you can experience it outside of social media, So IG, FB, our website, our APP, because we can create a tap through experience there, or full video. And then, apple news as a full video. So it needs to be able to create a full video version for apple news and our app, because I don't believe our app is coded right now to support tap through stories, and then tap through experience for IG and FB. so it's connected directly our website, so you can just press publish and it's fine, and it's tap through and everything you don't have to export it as individual files. So those 5.

C: It sounds like i'm sort of talking to you about it as it's being put together as it's going to become a full thing that people in the newsroom can use. DO you know when they're trying to get that rolled out by?

R: So it kind of depends on our developer to make the changes. The struggle right now, we want to make this tool a proactive thing, we're saving time and energy to make this type product, but we're also being innovative because we're providing a daily news product that you don't really see on these type of platforms, so to create the ability to export and upload and sound only files and animation, I know the animation features are built into AMP stories, so that shouldn't be too much of an ask, but I know the audio only stuff is all going to be custom code that is outside the parameters of google amp, so it really just depends on how long it takes the developer. So all of our developers are working on a whole lot of different things. The one I'm going to be working on in particular is doing these housekeeping things right now, there's a very very very long list of small things that need to be fixed, not the sort of sexy things our developers get to do, so she's

like, I don't know exactly what her bandwidth is going to be just because of my lack of code experience. The goal is for this CMS tool to be changed to match our approved prototype by the end of December. It really just depends. I know our audience team is already trained on how to use the tool. The only things they'd have to be trained on additional are these new buttons, which would take like no more than half an hour to do. Then we'd just teach them how to tweak them slightly for different platforms but it would take just like an hour to do that, so it really depends on how long the developer takes to get to this stuff. There's definitely a little bit of pushback from the head of product specifically, because he's kind of like: What do you think is necessary for this product, like music for example, is that really necessary for you to get the news? No it's not necessary, but it adds to the experience, it's something that users expect, even though most users watch these things on social media without sound, so you have to kind of compromise and figure out how, so being the product manager of this, I want all those features created now, rather than waiting until later, so it's probably going to be not until december, because we have a decent amount of features that need to be added.

C: It sounds like there's a pretty good plan in place to make sure it's sustainable going forward once you're gone. Which is the ideal, because something that I've found, often times development efforts get used to make a tool then people no longer, it doesn't have sustainable use down the line, because new people that come in aren't familiar with them or they aren't essential. A lot of times this happens because the input isn't gathered, it isn't communicated in a way that both parties know exactly what's necessary. I imagine at Mic it's a little bit easier, I imagine people there are a little bit more digital savvy than legacy newsrooms. I imagine that would make it a little easier to get people trained and using the feature. You won't your thing to actually be useful in the storytelling process. So you talked about having to avoid certain workarounds, I think that's a really common thing. You talked a lot about being proactive. I'd be interested to hear about your experiences you talked a lot about using the main CMS, I'm curious what that experience has been like. How easy was it to navigate? Is it pretty user friendly.

R: So I just started using it yesterday, so there are still some things that I haven't gotten acclimated to yet. It seems pretty simple, you can create a title, you can add what authors are writing on it, you can add tags, the standard stuff. Then you can add embed code into it, but from what I've noticed, it doesn't actually do anything with it. You paste in the embed code, it doesn't make it the thing it actually makes with the code You have to work with a developer to make sure that it actually appears as what you created. So I'm working on two pieces right now for the midterm, they're two interactive graphics that I made in tableau, so in order to make sure that's available on our website, we have to embed the code as i-frame, so in the two staged articles that I have right now that aren't published it's just all this embed code, but it just looks like code, so we have to work with a dev to actually make it into visible, I have no idea how they do that though. For my personal website I use wix, and there's a special function where you can paste

embed code, and you can visualize what it was, at least to my knowledge from my two days of using it.

C: so is mobile the focused avenue for the stuff that gets pushed out?

R: Yeah, I would say so. I think, I don't know the specific stats, but I think most of our users see us on mobile, they get our app notifications, they get our apple news notifications, they see us on social media, and so I think maybe our FB users are like loyal FB watch users that use desktop, but I think most of it is desktop. I mean our website is completely responsive, and our CMS is built to do that.

C: Like built for mobile in mind.

R: Yeah it's built for multiple devices, but yeah mobile is definitely our largest device base.

C: Make it a sustainable process going for it, when you devote resources going forward you want it be used. I am interested to see how it gets used.

R: just from my conversation, one of our developers has been there for 4 years. What she said, way back 4 years ago the product team that's in charge of these experiences, with how you actually consume the news, versus editorial, they really didn't work much together, they would just create what they thought was needed by the reporters by the users, and that's just not effective. They've learned a lot from that, but I asked one of two of our team members about when I was trying to figure out a good reporter for you to talk to, is there a reporter or editor that's very passionate about our CMS or changes to it, and they could not really think of anybody. There was no one in particular, you could tell that even though the product team is better about talking to editorial, there's still this disconnect. We had a product team meeting a few weeks ago where we talked about actually sitting down with the editorial team and figuring out what struggles they face and how we could help them as a product team, no one on the team, even though some have been there for years, could think of a single time they've done that.

C: Really, even though they work in the same office?

R: It was shocking, yeah we're right next to us. No one had ever taken the time to set up a meeting and just sit down and say, what are the things that really cause an obstacle in your reporting, whether that be transcribing or whatever, what tools could we build or add to our CMS to make your life easier. They have never had a conversation like that.

C: See that would seem to me that'd be the first place you'd want to start.

R: I'd assumed, even though I'd only been there two months, that they'd already done that at some point, and one of our project managers brought up this entire idea about we really need to be proactive about the tools that we make in order to be a really forward thinking newsroom. As a product team we need to really think about how we can make the lives of our editorial people better. Also, a big burden on product is you have to also somehow make the newsroom more innovative so you can get increased eyeballs looking at your stuff, increased space for ad revenue, and if you're able to make some of these tools to make journalists lives easier, their output could be double what it is right now.

C: if your workflow is more efficient, the less time you're dealing with stupid problems, the more time you can spend to do your work. That's fascinating to me, I would think that in a news organization that is digital native that would be a very high priority to be having, do you think that it's because, why do you think that is?

R: I do, I have a few. So product in particular is a very small team, we actually, when i started within the first two weeks they doubled in size, it was me, the VP of product, one product manager, 3 developers and that was it. Now we've added on a senior product designer, another front end developer, another insights analyst, and we're going to also be adding a data engineer very soon, so a very very small team for a national news outlet. So they have to literally do anything and everything tech for the company. Some of the projects they've been working on, one they've start on recently is called the nav project, it's literally just changing anything and everything on the website. Mic used to have subchannels, we kind of do now, but as a newsroom as a brand we don't identify with all these suboutlets, people get confused. Mic's not strong enough of a core brand for us to have all these verticals. Multiplayer, for example they don't do enough content everyday to support an actual vertical for that, so our navigation is going to change, and that's a lot of work. Once you change the navigation on your website, that kind of changes the entire thing. That's one of the big things they've been working on. They've had a lot of difficult and tedious data problems, which is why they're hiring a data engineer. But all of our developers have had to take on that work. So you have all these big projects and then you have all the day to day things going on that you have to fix, and them also we're in charge of everything that needs to happen for brand and sales, so you have to figure out the best to to display promotional ads, promotional editorial content, where is that going to be displayed. One of our developers literally spent weeks reconfiguring the website to double the amount of ad space, so it's a bandwidth issue. I feel like everyone is like, oh there are all these big projects that they're working on and they aren't able to think proactively. That's not just unique to product, it's all across the company. Our FB dispatch show, all of the journalists and correspondents working on that team are so so so busy, they can't think about how to better strategize or tweak or how that looks or how that should be in the future. At one of our company wide meetings, one

of our most prominent journalists brought that up. We are literally existing on the day to day grind. None of us have barely any time to breathe, how would we have time to even think about how to even think about how to make this better. And she was like what are you going to do about this, are you going to hire more people? Honestly, Mic leadership didn't have very solid answer. They are expanding right now and they are hiring more people, but it's in the very interview phase, they're slowly adding people on. You have a group of 150 people trying to provide quality premium video content and they want to do everything else, but they don't have the bandwidth, the people, the time to do it. The obvious thing, oh you should sit down with your editorial team and know what problems they're facing, I think when you're in the day to day grind, and you're not kind of an outside perspective, you might not think of that. You still are working with these editorial people on the day to day, but on these other projects

C: all these little touch points. The other thing I wonder, talking about language and communication, I think that sometimes it's difficult for newsroom people and product to be on the same page with their language and their terminology, and again I was thinking that in a digital first company that would be a bit easier. Somebody like The Times....Do you know, one other thing I was going to ask you about, what does the Slack look like that? Is that the primary mode of office communication?

R: Well that and email. It's interesting there are some people who prefer slack over email and vice-versa, there are some people who are in a lot of different slack channels, who are just like, ugh there's so much happening, send me an email, it's more formal that way. And then there's people that are like, my inbox are flooded with email everyday. If you want to get in contact with me quickly send me a message on slack. Kind of the overall consensus is when you're talking with someone individually and you need to get in contact with them quickly, contact them via slack. If you need to get in contact with people in a group setting, send them an email. You would think it would apply to group settings with Slack, but it really doesn't. From my own perspective. Because I had IG revamps, we created an entirely new Slack channel for that. So it's me, some product team members, some video editing members, and the entire audience team. IT's about 9 or 10 of us, so when I first started, what I would do, we had a weekly meeting set, and at each meeting I would prior, to the meeting happening I could create an agenda, it was basically a timeline but it was also an agenda for the meeting. Then I would also take notes during the meeting and I had an entire folder dedicated to meeting minutes so people could reflect on what was discussed in case they forgot. So after every meeting I would send out the minutes for the meeting and before the next meeting I would send out this agenda based on what would happen would happen last meeting, and I did this all via slack. The ability to notify everybody just like you would in group me, you can say like @, but what I noticed is that, people...even though I was going out of my way to do all this, because they all had access to the google drive, they knew I was doing this each week, I went out of my way to send it via slack,

there were definitely a good amount not reading it, so we'd show up to our meetings and they would completely forget everything we had discussed at the last meeting, because they are so busy, because there is so much on their plate, because everything is done reactively, which I think is a common thing among most newsrooms because of a lack of bandwidth, even the idea of doing anything proactive, like revamping the social platform that we've put on the backburner is just not a priority for people, so any info about it, they just don't remember. Even though they have all of this stuff accessible to them, they don't take the time to even look at it. Which is really unfortunate, but what I've found email is such a traceable and formal thing. You will always have access to emails you've sent from the past, in slack you don't. Because in some of these groups, after a certain amount of messages, after a certain amount of time it will just delete. So I think people, they just associate email with the super important formal stuff, and also you can cc people and they know they're being held accountable. Where as on slack there's kind of, oh I didn't get a notification, oh I didn't see the message, it's a lot more informal on slack, there's a lot more room for excuses. So not only did I create all these documents, then I had to start literally, I was advised to not just attach these documents to email, I literally had to copy and paste the documents into the email, because they just wouldn't take the extra step. Which makes sense with how we use technology today. People don't want to take the extra steps, they want to see it right where they are. In regards to communication in a newsroom that has lack of bandwidth, and you're working with multiple people, they don't necessarily care about updates that don't pertain to them exactly, so in order to get them to care about things that don't pertain to them, you have to be as formal as possible, and you have to be a nag about it. I'm such a nag. But like that's pretty much what it's come to. I'm sending out this agenda prior, so you know what we're going to talk about, and I'm also including who I'm expecting to talk to about what, I'll literally say, our director brand, you need to give us an update on this, so that she knows, and if she doesn't read it, during the meeting she'll see the agenda on the board, and she'll have like an, oh okay that was on the agenda. It's frustrating. The communication, I think newsrooms are still in this idea of being in separate bubbles, and there very proud of what those specific areas do, and so that's what's most important to them, so that makes sense... but they're all part of the team. I think even digital native newsrooms aren't adapted to proactive communication, the ability to work together to continue making, and doing all the work now, so that in the near future, you don't have to put out all these fires that happen, you can already have it fixed in advance, and I feel like newsrooms just aren't used to that type of mentality, even though Mic is a digitally native organization.

(relevant information ends)

Mic 3

C: (Recording cut off, but question is roughly as follows) So could you detail the process of writing a story in your CMS?

X: I would just kind of start posts inside there, and yeah, I'm not sure how much detail about just the writing process that I use in general, I kind of have a weird backwards process, I will write the bottom of the post first. Well, actually this usually applies to like a quick story that I do, like a quick story to get up in the morning. What I'll do is if there's a piece of news, say google released their new phone, if i want to hit that quickly, I'll kind of start at the bottom, so at the bottom of the post, that's where you'll put not the news, but kind of put background information about like what apple did earlier this year, kind of like background info to kind of color to what's happening. The reason I do that is because all that's prior knowledge, so I can kind of do that really quickly and kind of get it out the way, and then kind of spend brain power reading about the actual news, figuring out how to write it, and then putting it at the top. Like at the top I'll have the actual news, and then at the top I'll have background information, weirdly enough I'll start with the background part, it's already in mind already, I already know how to word it, I know the source links that I want to source them with, then I actually spend the creative brain power at the top, I hope that makes sense.

C: Perfect. So I'm not sure if you know the answer to this, but who's in charge of the CMS stuff at Mic? Who handles all of that?

X: So I don't know the exact answer, but I have a feeling it's the product team here at Mic. I remember back in the day, certain people on the product team would be really good about sitting with us and making sure certain parts of the CMS were not too buggy, seeing how we structured posts, and seeing what ways it could be tweaked to make the product better, but I'm pretty sure product team.

C: So people would come in and sit down and talk with you guys in the newsroom and walk you through certain things like that?

X: Yeah, so if there's a new feature, the product team will sit us down in a meeting and kind of explain it to us, not actually, they wouldn't schedule their own meeting, it'll be tacked on at the end, they'll kind of explain to us the new features and they'll walk us through it in that way.

C: So, how is the process, I don't if this have every really came up with you, but in general, if there's something is going problem wise, what's that process in the newsroom to figure that out?

How does it get resolved when there's an issue with the CMS, how do reporters handle that there?

X: That's a good question. So at Mic, we're lucky we have, so we have Slack, so we have a bunch of Slack channels, one of our channels is the bugs channel. So whenever there's a problem we'll drop it inside there, sometimes with a screen shot, sometimes with just a really descriptive text on what happens, and then a products person or someone on the bugs team will pay attention to that Slack room, and they'll either address the problem, or explain why that sort of happened. So there's also a user error console inside the CMS so you can report on what happened, that's an option too, but I think people mainly go to the bugs slack room.

C: Right, I would assume that's kind of the most direct way to handle things. So how long, has the same tool been in place, the same CMS tool been there since you've been there the entire time?

X: Yeah. I've only been here for two years now, but we've had the same exact cms since ive been here. I think this is like the 2nd revision of it. When i started here we had the cms and the beta cms which was newer but more buggy. And we've been, they ironed out some of the bugs, we've been on this beta cms for about a year and a half now. I've been using the samish one for two years.

C: So when you did make that switch over, I guess you were there when you switched over from the old one to the one that was in beta at the time, so how did that transition kind of go, was it a very difficult transition to make?

X: yes and no. One reason why it was difficult was all the bugs that were still present. But one reason it was easy is because it looked exactly like the CMS we used prior. It worked exactly in similar ways. I'm kind of trying to think of what about the beta CMS was different or new or better than the old CMS. They were so similar I can't even think of how they were different, maybe one is more lean. I'm actually not sure.

C: But they made it look very similar. I'd assume that takes a lot of the reacclimation out of it, if there's a not a big UI change.

X: Yeah, definitely not a big UI change, highly similar to the one that we used before.

C: so has there been any changes, features wise that have been added? You mentioned when there are new things going on, they'll sit you down and they'll be a meeting and sort of explain

it. Have there been any things added features wise since you've been there that you could remember, and sort of how did that the newsroom get acclimated to those.

X: So I'm trying to think right now. That's a good question. What comes to mind, this isn't a new feature, what comes to mind, I think this isn't a new feature, but it's a very useful feature and I think it was added during the beta cms. There's, you can upload your own image at the top of an article, and that's an image that appears above the body of the text. There's a tool in that little upload option, instead of upload, right next to it is a little image search, and it'll search AP news and getty images, and that's something that is very useful. I don't know if that's something that was part of the original CMS, but that's a feature that's highly very usable, and a lot of people use pretty often in the newsroom.

C: So I'm curious, she had mentioned the goal of that is for it to be easily useable for the next group, whoever comes in, to be able to upload or add stories to that. I don't know how much you know about that, but are there other tools that are sort of like that, that have been, she had mentioned that it's going to add the story CMS, are there other things like that that have been implemented to sort of streamline the workflow process?

X: That's a good question. It's kind of tough to say, the CMS is so barebones, it's literally just a white screen with a headline area and a text body area. It's so blank but it's also so capable.

C: So it is a pretty barebones systems. Do you ever run into issues where there are things that you would like it to do to be able to help you tell your stories better?

X: Yeah, that's a good question. It's really nice, because even though it's so barebones on the surface, behind the scenes it's really capable, one thing I like about it is, you copy a YOUTUBE link into the body of the page and all the sudden it automatically embeds the video. The thing is you usually use iframe, that string of randomness to embed a YT video, the thing is it's so easy to embed YT, you just put the link in the body, but there's no options to insert any old iframe, so it's convenient when you use YT but then it's inconvenient if you want to use anything else from outside, that may not be a major platform. We recently had a feature where we added an Instagram link, and it will automatically show the IG embed, but the thing is if I want to embed a photo or something from a different service, there's no iframe, there's no embed option, to kind of pull in lesser known third party services.

C: So what you do in that situation, if you want to add an image or something like that, what do you do if it doesn't work like that?

X: I guess it happens more so with videos than images, but in those situations you can just write out in text, you can check out a link to the video here, you can hyperlink it, you can find it on YT, you can find it on IG.

C: so there's not a way to get it actually embedded, interesting. So I'm curious, I know you haven't worked at Mic for your entire career, would you say that like, was the place you worked before, Popular Science if I remember correctly, how would you compare the two systems in place there, I have no idea what they have in place there, but would you...

X: Yeah, I have no idea why we called it this but we called it Sir Trevor, but we had switched over from one CMS to another at that job. I like the CMS at Mic better, it's much more easy to fully compose a post just in the CMS. I liked with the pop-sci CMS, it made use of a language called markdown language, have you heard of it?

C: I've heard of it, I can't say I know a lot about it, but I've heard the term.

X: Yeah, Markdown is not really that confusing at all, put asterisks next to a word to make it bold, put two asterisks next to a word to make it italics, it's a very simple kind of language, so it's kind of nice to be able to write using markdown, aside from that the CMS at Mic is better. It's very barebones, but beneath the surface it allows you to do a lot. But the thing is, well it allows you to do a medium amount, but then with this pop Sci CMS, we were able to make these articles we would call EEFs, extended editorial features, and it was not super hard to get like a really beautiful article layout using the CMS, whereas Mic's CMS, I'm not even sure how we would go about making a really beautiful splashy news article.

C: so is it accurate to say at popSci, it was a little easier to customize the format because of the language it was written in?

X: Yeah, I guess because of the nature of the CMS, a lot of the plumbing was exposed, so you could really tweak that kind of stuff, whereas this really simple, it's good if you're writing a quick post or a medium post, but if you want something that's really involved, the CMS may not let you do that. You kind of have to have special privileges.

C: In those situations, I mean, I'm assuming that Mic does more flashy features from time to time, so is there a producer usually involved in that.

X: Yeah, so I think there's usually a product person involved. I've never had a big, well I've had big pieces come out at Mic, but there were never really involved in the splashy article view side of things. But I imagine you work with product to make it look really nice.

C: Another question that I had, and this relates more to the issues thing, when there's a problem, how often would you say that pops up in your work, how often would you have to report stuff like that? Like ask for tech assistance? Is that very common?

X: How often do I have to report it? I haven't done it in a very long time, certain problems in the CMS are just kind of in there, unfortunately, to stick. Our CMS has a couple weird things. They test it in Chrome, I use firefox, but it's much more stable in chrome than firefox, but I've just submitted to that. Whenever you add just a single apostrophe, our headlines have a word count ,or a character count more accurately, but whenever you write a single apostrophe in that headline, no matter where you are, the cursor will always go to the end of a sentence, which is annoying when you're typing out a headline or editing something. So certain bugs are just understood to be part of the CMS. I haven't reported one in a while, but last time I did it was like 4 or 5 months ago.

C: it's interesting you mention, do people just kind of just accept those kind of bugs. You said that you use firefox as opposed to chrome, so that might be part of the reason, but are there other things that people who are using chrome just kind of have to deal with?

X: Yeah, there definitely are, the apostrophe thing I mentioned in headline, that happens across all browsers. One thing that is unfortunate about our CMS is that, and at Popsi, if someone else tried to enter your article while you were in it, they would not be allowed to enter. Because two people could not be editing an article at the same time. At Mic, if you have the CMS link, anyone can enter the article, and when you have multiple people in the article, there's a risk that changes won't be saved. Imagine, say you and I have the same CMS link that we're about to click, say I'm in the article right now and make a bunch of changes, you're still in the article and you open it up, and also I should mention it autosaves every so often, just out of convenience, so if we're both in the article and it's autosaving left and right, the changes that one person makes might get erased by the other person's autosave.

C: so it's not collaborative, even though both people can be in it at the same time.

X: exactly. It's not googledocs where two people can be can put 4 hands in the project. It will always see just two hands in the project, and the other two hands that made all those changes will unfortunately have all those changes may be erased, because it can only.

C: and so why would they not just make it so that only one person could be in it at the same time, are their advantages to multiple people being able to get in there.

X: yeah there's definitely advantages. I'm not sure why that we do it the way we do. I assume it's just a limitation with the CMS that we use and I imagine that they couldn't fix it now, there's just nothing that could be done.

C: (my input about collaborative editing...) One other question that I had for you, I pretty much covered all the bases here, would you say that the one at Mic is pretty empowering at the newsroom and makes the job easier.

X: Yeah I would that It's really nice if you have to get the news up quickly, just being able to open up the CMS, edit in the CMS and just write it right there. I used to write my stories first in evernote and then copy it over to the CMS but to just be able to write in the CMS kind of shortens things.

C: does it have a specific name?

X: I'm pretty sure the CMS we use is based off WYSIWYG.

(relevant info ends)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Newsroom actors:

1. Who is responsible for CMS related decision making?
 - a. How are those decisions made? (Meetings, collaboratively, etc.)
2. How do those responsible for CMS decisions interact with newsroom actors?
 - a. Are there in house developers?
 - b. Do developers interact with newsroom actors directly?
3. If you want to create a piece in a new story form that isn't supported by the CMS, how does that happen?
 - a. How does this translate into a new CMS feature?
4. How do developers gather input for the CMS from newsroom actors?
 - a. What internal structures are in place to facilitate this interaction?
5. How do newsroom actors learn to use the CMS?
 - a. Learn to use new features within the CMS?
6. How clearly are the capabilities of the system explained?
7. If a CMS related problem arises, how do you try and fix it?
 - a. OR - Do you try and fix it at all, or just work around it?
 - b. Is this method successful?
 - c. How much time is spent on resolving CMS related issues?
8. Can you provide any examples of a story you've worked on, or seen put together that has inspired a CMS related change?
 - a. How did that process go?
9. Does the CMS facilitate better work, or does it more often hinder progress?
 - a. AKA does it weigh down the newsroom or empower it?
10. How has the experience been different working in a newsroom without a proprietary system?

Developers:

1. How is the CMS team organized?
2. Who is responsible for ultimately making decisions on CMS design?
 - a. How are those decisions reached?
3. Do these design decisions get input from the everyday newsroom users?
 - a. How?
 - b. When?

4. Are newsroom actors free to discuss design features or complaints with the system after a feature has been designed?
5. What metrics are in place to measure the use and success of a given CMS feature?
 - a. How do you determine the success of the CMS as a whole?
6. How often do CMS related problems arise?
 - a. How are these issues addressed?
 - b. What does the communication look like between newsroom users with CMS issues and developers?
7. Are certain story forms viewed as more essential for the CMS to accommodate?
8. If a newsroom user wants to do something not supported by the CMS, how do developers accommodate that?
9. Are there any successful examples of new features that were introduced that became mainstays in the news production process?
10. Are there initiatives in place to ensure newsroom users are aware and educated of all the CMS features?
 - a. What do they look like?
11. When a CMS or CMS feature is designed, what does that process look like from conception to completion?

PROPOSAL

Introduction

I was first introduced to a newsroom when I began the graduate program at the University of Missouri. During my first semester, I enrolled in the news editing course, and began as a copy editor for the *Missourian*.

Copy editing students attend a lab shift, where they edit *Missourian* content for both print and digital publication. It was during these first lab shifts that I had my first interactions with a newsroom content management system (CMS).

BLOX, the *Missourian*'s most recent CMS, was an out-of-the-box split system that managed both print and digital workflows. The BLOX system, when linked with other software, like Google Drive and InDesign, was responsible for the entire newsroom workflow process at the *Missourian*. BLOX was also responsible for the *Missourian*'s web publishing and website management, ensuring that assets found their way to the proper locations.

Reporters uploaded their stories into BLOX, where they were able to further write and edit. After submission, BLOX facilitated the movement of the asset throughout the rest of the newsroom. The photo department would add pictures and captions, the graphics desk could attach relevant assets, and eventually, the story made its way to the copy editors and designers.

It was at this stage that I first interacted with a CMS. Editors would edit stories by signing into the BLOX server, which included an included text editor. After making required

changes, the stories would be sent down the workflow, either for web publication, or to designers for print layout.

Within a single editing shift, I realized how essential BLOX was for Missouriian operations. The BLOX CMS was attached to every aspect of the newsroom, and though this central connection allowed for the collaboration required in the newsroom, it also meant that any errors or problems had far reaching consequences. If the CMS was working as intended, the news production process was smooth and streamlined; if BLOX had errors or issues, the newsroom struggled. Workflows were interrupted, assets were lost or deleted and other software crashed.

Though it would cost time and energy, newsroom actors were almost always able to find a workaround for these kinds of CMS errors. However, there was seldom a newsroom actor present with the required knowledge or experience to diagnose and solve the root problem. Since BLOX was an out-of-the-box system, the Missouriian was required to use communication channels to coordinate technical support from the BLOX service provider. If the Missouriian IT department was unable to fix the issue, the newsroom was forced to call on the developer.

In my observation, the communication between the Missouriian and TownNews (the company that developed BLOX) was often slow and challenging. There was only a handful of newsroom actors who understood the CMS well enough to engage in these conversations, and fewer with the experience to walk through an issue on the newsroom end and fix the problem. Communication between different fields can be challenging, especially when fields utilize different language and methods to discuss and solve problems (Doherty, 2012).

Based on my observations at the *Missourian*, I decided to focus my graduate project on the interaction between CMS developers and newsroom actors. I have found, through preliminary conversations with working journalists in the field, that the situation at the *Missourian* is not uncommon.

When a small newsroom has to switch systems or add a new feature to existing systems, they often lack the resource power to develop solutions in-house. These newsrooms turn to open-source options, or out-of-the-box systems, such as BLOX. Lacking the required technical expertise, newsroom actors then have to navigate the aftermath, adapting to new workflows while learning a new software.

The marriage of technology in the newsroom has not always been successful, and the industry is rife with examples of failed innovation, no matter the size of the newsroom.

This project will study the interactions between CMS developers and newsroom users within organizations that have found success in the digital age through the creation of proprietary CMSes. The goal of this project is to aid newsrooms by developing a set of best practices through the study of these newsroom communications.

These principals will aid other newsrooms in making informed decisions when designing, switching or making decisions related to CMSes. Though this project will focus on large news organizations developing proprietary management systems, all newsrooms are forced to make CMS related decisions, no matter the size. By studying the methods by which industry leaders tackle CMS challenges and how and if these organizations facilitate interaction and communication between users and developers, other newsrooms may be able to learn how to

avoid common mistakes, and will have a clear set of guidelines to draw on when making CMS related decisions.

Understanding these principles will lead to better informed newsrooms, and will provide newsroom actors the skills and vocabulary to engage in more effective communication with those developing the tools shaping the future of the industry.

Professional skills

The professional skills section of my project will consist of work at a publication in New York. Through the New York program offered at the University of Missouri, I will live in the city during the Fall 2018 semester while working 30 hours a week at a chosen publication. I will seek a position as a copy editor for a large news organization. I have already reached out to a handful of organizations, and have established a contact at both the New York Times and Washington Post. I will continue to send applications until I find a suitable organization.

My project centers around the development of proprietary CMSes for newsroom use. All newsrooms have to make decisions related to their CMS. To help better inform these decisions, my project will seek to determine guiding principles used by industry leaders when developing their CMSes through a series of interviews, alongside observations during the internship process.

Copy editing is my focus area, and though my project is centered around an issue that is not specifically focused on editing, all departments in the newsroom have interaction with the CMS, and working on an editing desk will provide me an opportunity to get hands-on experience with the internship site's CMS. Further, it will allow me to establish relationships with other newsroom staff, who may be able to provide insight into their experiences and interactions with the CMS and inform further research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

My experience on the Missourian copy-editing desk, in addition to the numerous editing courses I have taken at the university, will prepare me for my professional skills experience.

Though I am currently still searching for potential sites for my professional skills component, the ideal location will be a publication which has recently undergone a transition to a proprietary CMS. In finding a site which has recently made this transition would ensure that the transition strategies and development decisions will still be fresh in the minds of those in the newsroom.

In a perfect world, my professional skills component would help to serve the analysis component, but I am aware that it may be difficult to find a site which meets all of the desired criteria. In the event that I am unable to find a suitable location, I will instead try to find a copy-editing position at another organization in New York City, and conduct my analysis component outside the chosen site.

Since my site has not yet been chosen, I am unsure of the exact nature of my responsibilities while conducting the skills component of my project. Once I have a more complete understanding of my position, I will make the appropriate revisions to this section.

Professional analysis

This project hopes to establish a framework that outlines the guiding principles of newsroom CMS development. Though small newsrooms have different needs than large national news organizations, all newsrooms use some kind of CMS, and all newsrooms are forced to make decisions regarding the CMS at multiple points during the life of the publication (Paulussen, 2016; Rodgers, 2015). Establishing a clear set of guiding principles will provide news organizations a resource when making CMS-related decisions.

To accomplish this goal, I will conduct semi-structured interviews with newsroom actors from five industry-leading publications that use in-house designed CMSes. These actors will consist of frontline newsroom staff (editors, designers and reporters) and CMS developers/managers. Each of these groups will be asked a selection of questions directed toward aspects of CMS development: usage patterns, development decisions, and communication between developers and users.

This project will combine these interviews with observations from my own CMS usage experience at the internship site to construct a tentative set of best practices for newsroom CMS development, primarily through the lens of communities-of-practice theory.

Research questions & method

R1: How do newsroom users and content management system developers communicate at news organizations that have built proprietary systems?

R2: Do newsroom actors have input in the design and development process of these systems?

This project will use a series of semi-structured interviews, alongside my on-site observations and experiences with CMS use. The ethnography-style observation notes will provide context to the semi-structured interview findings, and will help to inform interview questions as the project progresses.

In a purely ethnographic approach, I would only have the time and resources to conduct a proper study at one site. Since proprietary CMSes vary greatly depending on the needs of the news organization and its actors (Rodgers, 2015), a one-site study would not provide adequate information to draw conclusions about normative principles for the industry at large. To gain a

wider understanding of industry trends in CMS development, this project will include semi-structured interviews with no less than nine newsroom actors from three distinct news organizations that have built proprietary CMSes.

Sites

Potential interview sites include industry leading news organizations that have developed, and use, an in-house CMS. The use of an in-house system is necessary, as this ensure CMS experts will be present within the organization. There are a number of organizations that meet this criteria, but a few locations stand out as ideal. Ideal sites will differ from one another in their publishing strategies and mediums, ensuring a diverse sample (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Examples of potential sites include: The New York Times, Vox Media, Fast Company and BuzzFeed.

There is a chance that I will be unable to find interviewees from the site examples listed above. Since sites will depend on interviewee participation, I will have additional sites selected if one of these options does not work out.

Sample

The sample of interview participants will be chosen using a snowball sampling method. By using a sampling method which relies on the connections made at the newsroom, it will be easier to find interviewees who have the most input and interaction with CMSes. Further, this sampling method will alleviate some of the difficulty in finding participants who are willing to share information is often kept close to the vest. “Snowball sampling is well-suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or people who have certain attributes in common. It is also

sometimes the best way to reach an elusive, hard-to-recruit population” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2016, p 114).

The number of actors chosen was nine. This will include three interviews from each of the three chosen news organizations. The sample size was set at nine based on expected availability and time. Despite the absence of hard and fast rules on sample size, Lindlof & Taylor (2011) state that the main things to consider are “the scope of the project, the complexity of the scene under study, and the researcher’s time and resources.”

I will have approximately ten weeks to conduct research in New York, not including time in the summer to establish contacts and schedule interviews. This would allow for three weeks for each organization, with an extra week to settle in. A sample size of nine will provide enough time to process and refine my notes, prepare for future interviews and synthesize my data.

The sample will include three members from each of two groups from all three chosen publications. These groups are newsroom staff (reporters and editors) and CMS developers/managers. The sample will contain one reporter, one editor and one developer.

These groups were chosen as they will provide the best sample for understanding both development decision making and communication between newsroom and developers.

Interviews

Interviews will be semi-structured. Each group will be asked a different set of questions to facilitate conversation, but interview questions will otherwise be informed by my observations while on-site, alongside both prior interview information and the direction of the conversation. A sample of interview questions for both groups at the end of this section.

Newsroom staff (editors and reporters) will be questioned primarily about usage patterns and communication channels. Sites that have built proprietary CMSes usually have larger resource pools, but it is not adequate to accept at face value that these resources have led to perfect systems. Understanding these frustrations and usage patterns may help identify what newsroom duties have the most friction with CMSes, thus informing future interview questions and highlighting potential problem areas for other newsrooms to avoid or overcome in the future.

These interviews will also question the modes of communication that exist between frontline staff and CMS developers/managers, and will seek information regarding newsroom input into CMS design, interactions with developers and CMS problem reporting.

The set of interviews with newsroom staff will serve as a useful tool for gaining access to the appropriate actors, thus improving the quality of the snowball sample. These newsroom staff will act as a kind of informant interview, and will be useful in directing me to further appropriate or useful contacts related to the project (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

The second group of interviewees will consist of CMS developers/managers. As the newsroom actors who have either created, or manage a site's CMS, members of this group will include industry experts with an in-depth understanding of both their organization's CMS, and CMS design as a whole.

These interviews will seek information regarding CMS development decision making, the central question being: What principles guide your organization's development of newsroom CMSes?

This group's interview questions will draw from information gathered during interviews with frontline staff. If staff note a particular feature is useful (or useless), these interviews will attempt to unearth the underlying reasons for its creation and implementation.

These interviews will also seek information regarding interactions with frontline staff, in an attempt to establish guidelines for effective communication.

It must be noted that this group is less defined than the first. newsroom staff, in terms of reporter, editor or designer is a simple criterion, but CMS developer/manager may also be a frontline staff, depending on the structure of the newsroom. Though I suspect that many of the potential sites will have dedicated development teams, these teams may not operate in the same location as the newsroom. Further, developers may move on after the completion of a project. It is for these reasons that I differentiated between developers and managers. If the original developer is unavailable, I will instead seek out the person currently in charge of managing the system.

Another potential complication of these interviews that must be addressed is potential anonymity. If journalists are asked to share experiences related to their current employment, it is possible that they will wish to remain anonymous. Therefore, interviewees will be granted anonymity on a case-by-case basis if requested.

Each interview will be transcribed. After completing all required interviews, the transcriptions will be analyzed. The main method of this analysis will be the comparison of common trends in CMS development decision making and newsroom communication among the chosen sites, and I will search for examples of both successes and failures of CMSes (Lindlof &

Taylor, 2011). By examining these elements, alongside information on CMS development goals provided in the interviews, a set of best practices or guidelines could be extrapolated.

Sample questions

The following are a list of possible questions for each group of interviewees. These questions are meant to serve as a starting point, on which I can build new and more involved questions as I learn more about the intricacies of CMS development and newsroom communication. The questions may change, and may include more questions not listed below.

Group 1: Newsroom staff

1. How do you interact with the CMS to complete daily work?
 - a. For example, what tasks in your day require you to access and use the CMS to complete?
2. Do you feel comfortable using your CMS?
 - a. How tech-savvy does one have to be to use this system?
3. How did you learn how to use the system?
 - a. What training methods were in place?
 - b. Who teaches new faculty about the system and how?
4. Are there features of the CMS that stand out to you as especially useful?
 - a. What makes these features useful?
5. What would you consider essential features of the CMS for your use?
6. Are there features of the CMS that are frustrating or difficult to use?

- a. Do you talk with others in the newsroom about these difficulties?
 - b. Are there workarounds you have developed to navigate these challenges?
7. When you run into a CMS related issue, how do you attempt to solve that problem?
 - a. Who do you talk to?
8. Who is responsible for making CMS related decisions?
 - a. Where are they (in the newsroom, at an outside location)?
 - b. How often are you in contact with these decision makers?
9. Do you have any interaction with CMS developers?
 - a. If so, how much?
 - b. How/where does this interaction take place?
10. Do those actors responsible for making CMS decisions gather input from the newsroom?
 - a. If so, when and how?
11. How often does your CMS prevent you from accomplishing your daily goals?
 - a. How often do errors occur?
 - b. How are these errors reported? To whom?
12. What is your level of engagement with those responsible for CMS development?
13. Would you classify your experiences with CMS as positive or negative? Why?

Group 2: CMS developers/managers

1. What is your role at X organization?
2. How involved are you in the development decisions behind the CMS?
3. If not you, who makes development decisions?

- a. What is the process for this decision making?
4. What was the process from design to development to implementation of this particular system?
 - a. What kind of timeline to expect?
5. Are there guiding rules followed when making these CMS decisions?
 - a. If so, what are they? How are they determined?
 - b. When designing CMS features, what are the overall goals?
6. How often/do you communicate with newsroom staff?
 - a. How does this communication take place?
7. What are the most/least useful features included in the CMS?
8. How often do CMS problems occur?
 - a. What are the most common errors/problems on a day-to-day basis?
 - b. What is the problem-solving process in place?
9. What features/areas cause the most friction with newsroom users?
 - a. Are there problem/friction areas that have been fixed in the past?
 - b. If so, what strategies were devised to solve these problems?
10. Are there any cornerstone features included in this system?
11. How long has this system been in place?
12. Are the original developers of the system still involved?

Timeline

To complete this project, I will conduct a series of nine interviews over the course of my stay in New York. I am hoping to gather information from three organizations. If I am in New

York able to research for 10 weeks, this would allow three weeks per organization, or about week per interview. This project will require preliminary groundwork, finding contacts and scheduling. Therefore, I have already started establishing contacts, and plan to have at least one organization chosen and interviews scheduled before my arrival in New York.

If I arrive in New York at the end of August, I hope to have established the required contacts for all newsroom staff interviews by no later than Sept. 21. Allowing one interview per week, all first group of interviews would be completed by the first week of October.

While these first round of interviews is in progress, I will also be working on establishing contacts and scheduling the interviews with the second group. All second-round interviews will be scheduled by the first week of October, allowing another three weeks for this round of interviews. This timeline indicates that all interviews would be conducted and transcribed by the end of October, allowing the month of November to be used for research analysis and writing. If all goes according to plan, the defense of this project will be scheduled in the third week of November.

I have already established a contact at one potential site, and will continue to make these contacts over the coming months, leading up to the project. The more scheduling and contact work that is out of the way beforehand, the more time I will be able to focus on the actual interview process.

This timeline is subject to change. The professional skills internship will impact my availability, and may require interview dates to be changed or rearranged. Further, interviewees may not be available in the above times. To ensure that interviews will be successful, this project timeline will need to remain flexible.

Literature Review

The development of digital CMSes is a relatively recent trend. Only within the past ten years have the technologies been widely available to create systems like those in use today. However, there has been past research conducted related to the development of these systems and the intersection of technology and journalism (Anderson & Kriess, 2013). Further, there is a plethora of research on the topic of newsroom innovation. This study will draw from this past research and hopes to build upon the foundation already available.

Innovation in the newsroom has been a trend that has been heavily studied. As newsrooms search for new revenue streams, innovation has become a particularly salient topic. This innovation is not always a positive, and in Ryfe's (2009) ethnography "Broader and Deeper," he outlines how newsroom changes can affect work practice.

Ryfe's ethnography is a detailed ethnographic study of a newsroom experiencing change. Over a period of 18 months, Ryfe worked in and observed the interactions between journalism practices and the new requirements of a brand-new editor. This new editor attempted to make changes to the newsroom, which altered the methods by which the journalists working for the newspaper were to perform their daily tasks.

The interruption of daily norms did not go over well, according to Ryfe's study. He found that the journalists were resistant to the new methods asked of them in gathering news. The interruption in daily work routines became more than some of the paper's staff could handle, and as a result many of the journalists working at the paper left by the time the study concluded.

Ryfe's findings are relevant to this study, as it confirms that newsroom change is can be detrimental to newsroom faculty, especially older, more veteran staff.

While Ryfe's piece does appear to further the theory that newsrooms are resistant to change, the study's focus was not specific in examining technological innovation. Though the themes of Ryfe's study are salient to my research, I plan to go beyond procedural changes in the newsrooms to look at the technologies that shape those changes.

Paulussen's 2016 article "Innovation in the Newsroom" echoes many of the difficulties outlined in the Ryfe ethnography. The article attempts to paint a broad picture of industry trends regarding innovation, and explore how the climate surrounding news media has affected the technologies being included within these systems. The 'creative destruction' of the newsroom is suggested to be taking place all over the industry (Paulussen, 2016). This theory of newsroom change "considers newsroom innovation neither as a strategy, nor as an end goal, but as a process – as a 'series of dynamics, mechanisms, means, and changes that lead to a particular outcome'" (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). Like a living organism, the changes taking place within the newsroom are part of an endless cycle of adaptation.

Paulussen's article lays out a set of factors that influence this adaptation process, including economic barriers, organizational structures and workplace practices. In each section, the article briefly summarizes past research related to the particular topic.

In one such section, the article mentions a selection of studies, focused on technological innovation, that fall in the category of the 'social shaping of technology' (SST) perspective.

SST suggests that there is a mutual shaping between technology and society, and that the interactions that take place between the two create the perception and use cases for those technologies. "From a social shaping perspective, technology is seen as an outcome of processes

of negotiation between social actors, artefacts, interests, and diverse framings of problems and solutions,” (Clausen & Gunn, 2015, p. 74).

It is this shaping process that my project seeks to study: the interaction between the technology (CMS) and society (newsroom).

Other studies have applied these kinds of theories to the study of technology in the newsroom. Weiss and Domingo (2010) conducted research at four different news organizations around the globe, and constructed a framework for digital news innovation through the lens of two SST-styled theories: Actor network theory (ANT), and communities of practice (CoP). Both theories address similar ideas, but are distinct in their evolution. In the framework constructed in the Weiss and Domingo article, both theories are held to be effective methods for studying innovation in the newsroom.

The first of these theories is actor-network theory. This theory assumes that “social structure shapes social action,” and states that, “social groups are better understood as actor-networks: a net of relationships in which each member (an actor or actant) has a contingent position that can change over time depending on the equilibrium of power, strategies and definitions of the network that different members have” (Weiss & Domingo, 2010, 1159).

Weiss and Domingo state that ANT posits innovation as a translation of positions and roles in the network, shaped by power relationships. They also state that under ANT theory, the technology itself is an actor, and the embedded definitions of that technology can shape its development.

Communities of practice is the second theory Weiss & Domingo apply to their framework. In their study, they define CoP as a method of learning defined by “how the

journalists interact, negotiate, set boundaries and limitations, and their level of participation with each other as they come to define and utilize the new technologies that are adopted in the newsroom” (Weiss & Domingo, 2010, p. 1160). CoP theory states that learning does not occur in a vacuum, and nearby interactions, experiences and available resources all affect the process. Weiss and Domingo suggest that these theories:

“Invite us to understand innovation as a social process of change that is embedded in everyday practice. Innovations, as well as the dedicated teams that design and develop them, are part of newsroom structures (networks of actors, communities of practice) that dynamically promote or resist change, react and adapt to it and shape both the definition of the news product and the technologies used to produce it” (Weiss & Domingo, 2010, p. 1151).

This interaction point is central in understanding how newsrooms are able to get the most out of their CMSes.

The results of Weiss and Domingo’s study show that the interactions between newsroom actors have a definitive effect on the use of technologies. Though these results apply ANT theory to the CMS related research by examining the power structures behind them, CoP theory is also used to describe the learning processes that take place in the newsroom community.

By applying CoP theory to the communities at large newsrooms, Weiss and Domingo found that CoP theory is most apparent in addressing news flow, a central element of the CMS. For this reason, my study plans to build on the CoP framework by examining newsroom interactions regarding the development of CMSes. Though both ANT and CoP have value, there have been ANT focused studies on newsroom CMSes, such as Rodgers (2015) and Anderson &

Kriess (2013). In an effort to contribute new information, my project will focus more specifically on CoP theory.

CoP theory stems from the field of education and anthropology. It was first put forward by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (1991), and expanded on by Wenger in the 1998 book *Communities of Practice*. Wenger explains the definition of this theory, and its application to the study of businesses and organizations in the article “Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Wenger and Snyder explain that communities of practice create pools of intangible, shared knowledge between members of their community (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). This pool of knowledge exists in newsroom communities, and we have already seen how research can draw study this knowledge to draw conclusions about newsroom interaction and learning (Weiss & Domingo, 2010).

Wenger provides examples of effective communities of practice, and details the benefits that this style of learning has within organizations. As the creator of theory, Wenger is the best source for a clear definition of CoP, and though this article is not the origin of the theory, it does frame the CoP theory through the lens of organizations, rather than education. For the purpose of this project, it is the organizational/business aspects of CoP that will be utilized. Having a clear definition, as defined by its creator, allows the clearest understanding of the theory.

An example of the CoP framework applied to newsroom studies can be seen in Meltzer and Martik’s article “Journalists as communities of practice.” This study details the history of journalism group definition, and establishes whether CoP is able to serve as an adequate frame for this division, stating that, “The communities framework is useful for understanding how

journalists interact while they are engaged in the process of newswork (Meltzer & Martik, 2017, p. 212).

Going beyond CoP theory, this article also applies the boundary work framework to help explain the need for journalists to “demarcate ‘journalism norms, practices and participants’” (Meltzer & Martik, 2017, p. 212).

Meltzer & Martik argue that, though CoP theory has been applied to newsrooms by other scholars, there lacks a direct relationship that directly connects the two in current literature. The study continues to provide examples of journalistic communities of practice that already exist, citing the Washington Post’s social media guidelines as one such example.

Meltzer & Martik’s study does not directly address the idea of CMS use as a potential area of the development of a community of practice. However, based on the criteria provided by Wenger & McDermott, and prior newsroom CMS studies, CoP can be an effective method to study CMSes.

In addition to CoP related studies on this topic, there have also been a collection of studies that apply ANT theory to newsroom innovation. Although ANT theory focuses more on the power relationships between actors in the newsroom, the studies that use it are useful, as they describe effective methods for the study of CMSes. ANT theory is also applicable to my research regarding communication methods in the newsroom.

Anderson and Kreiss’ article details the actor-network theory (ANT) and its applications to ethnographies on subjects “about unsettled socio-technical systems” (Anderson & Kreiss, 2013, p. 365). They suggest that actor network theory suggests the methods by which technology is created shape the ways that society views said technology. Anderson and Kreiss’ research is valuable to this study, as they outline a theory that researchers can use to understand CMSes and

wider trends in political power: “We show how Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and its principle of symmetry between the human and the nonhuman and attention to the work of assembling and disassembling can help ethnographers disclose the socio-technical processes that structure political power” (Anderson & Kreiss, 2013, p. 366).

Their study, which claims that through these negotiations, newsrooms often end up with “black boxes,” or a “networks that have been stabilized to such a degree that they appear solid and thus act as intermediaries,” (Anderson & Kreiss, 2013, p. 368).

One such example of a black box system is the CMS. Through the examination of a newsroom CMS, Anderson and Kriess claim that the CMS development decisions are directly informed by the power relationships of newsroom actors and that “journalistic autonomy [is] part of a larger, deeply embedded journalistic culture valorizing the local control of news production” (Anderson & Kriess, 2013, p.).

Rodgers’ ANT-theory-based newsroom CMS study confirms Anderson and Kriess’ findings. His ethnographic study of the *Toronto Star* outlines the difficulties faced by a newsroom using an outdated CMS (TOPS). He suggests that the complex ontology of the software has allowed these systems to evolve in partial autonomy from users. In the construction of his study, he suggests that the ethnographic approach can help fill the gap of research within the study of online web-publishing technologies (Rodgers, 2015).

Rodgers’ study provides an excellent example of a successful study of a newsroom CMS. Over six years, he observed a newsroom changing to a proprietary CMS. He breaks down the actors involved in his study into three groups: the web operation, developers and newsroom managers. These groups are identified as the key actors involved in the process. It is from this

division that my study design was informed, and I selected my interview participant groups based directly on Rodger's model.

Rodgers details his observations related to the TOPS CMS and its failure. Ultimately, the site switched CMSes to an out-of-the-box option, and the development team was folded into the organization. He concludes that, "journalism research needs to take seriously the trans-local, autonomous operation of software, even as they rightly emphasize nuanced research into the local and associational interactions of journalistic practice and technology" (Rodgers, 2015, p. 23). Rodgers study not only serves as a roadmap for CMS related studies, it reveals that the software and technologies used in journalism increasingly affect the practices of the industry. He stresses that, "what is needed is a better account of the conditions of possibility through which the political communication embodied by journalism practices is experienced, performed and ordered," (Rodgers, 2015, p. 23). It is the aim of this research to address this need.

The ANT focused studies make it clear that communication and power relationships play into CMS development decisions (Rodgers, 2015). Therefore, there can be no doubt that for journalism to successfully innovate, it is necessary to establish effective channels of communication. This can be difficult, as the gap in language between journalism and software development is wide (Doherty, 2012).

Doherty's study on technology literacy in the newsroom explains, through a mixed-methods study, that newsroom skills have not caught up to the increasing technology demands in the newsroom, again linking back to trends of digitization in the industry.

The article was published in 2012, during what one could define as peak-crisis time for journalism. The industry was (and still is) experiencing massive upheaval, and the changes

sweeping across newsrooms created a massive divide in communication (Doherty, 2012). Measures to address this divide include the adaptation of journalism education and the incorporation of data skills into the wheelhouse of traditional journalists, and though some of these measures have been put into play over the past five years, there is still room for the integration of computer science and coding skills in the newsroom. In increasing journalists' abilities in these fields, journalists will increase their ability to have a say in the evolution of the industry (Doherty, 2012).

Theoretical framework

Recent changes in the media landscape have forced newsrooms to push for innovation to adapt to the incorporation of new technologies. As technology has advanced, newsrooms have sought to utilize these innovations to produce deeper, faster, better researched and more engaging content, specifically in the digital realm. In today's news market — according to Pew Research's state of the media digital news fact sheet, "In the U.S., roughly nine-in-ten adults (93%) ever get news online" (Stocking, 2017) — the platforms created to get news from producer to audience are increasingly central to the newsroom process.

These back-end systems developed for the newsroom have been in existence well before the advent of the digital news era. In simplest terms, a CMS is the system developed to get content from creation to production to publication. All newsrooms have some form of organized workflow, but with the development of new technologies, these workflows have become digitized, and began to incorporate more and more features to help those involved in news production remain competitive in the ever-diverse field of information.

Many large and established news organizations are increasingly emphasizing “digital first” journalism, and the systems developed to create, collaborate, edit, and publish the news have been reinvented. “Since the beginning of the 21st century nearly all broadcast and news organizations have been restructured to adapt to the digital age” (Paulussen, 2016). Over the past ten years, organizations like the New York Times, The Washington Post, Vox, and many others have built new proprietary CMSes from the ground up.

These proprietary systems have been designed in an attempt to better meet the needs of the publications that design them. However, though these new systems offer powerful tools to the newsroom, past research on newsroom innovation suggests that changes to something as fundamental as the CMS come with costs.

Resistance to innovation in the newsroom has been a long-discussed topic in the field of journalism research. In the past, scholars have suggested that news outlets have been slow to adopt innovation. This is particularly true of legacy news organizations, which also happen to be the industry leaders. They have been slow to adopt new digital technologies, and have also struggled to construct digital strategies for evolving the news production process (Paulussen, 2016). This is in part due to the revenue model of legacy media outlets. Though the struggles of print media have been well documented, legacy media outlets still draw a large portion of revenue from their traditional media models, which has made them more unlikely to adopt and invest in new technologies (Paulussen, 2016).

However, as recent trends show, legacy outlets are now frantically attempting to restructure and prioritize to thrive in the digital news environment. This process often involves

the creation of a new CMS, alongside other structural and organizational changes, which, when occurring all at once, can throw a newsroom into a state of chaos (Rodgers, 2015).

In studying innovation trends, three distinct areas in the field of journalism are highlighted: organizational structures, work practices and user representations (Boczkowski, 2004). The CMS is central to all three of these areas, and this project seeks to focus on both organizational structures and work practices, as a CMS has a direct effect on both.

These innovation trends that have driven newsrooms to embrace new technologies are the same that inspire the construction of new CMSes. The values of immediacy, interactivity and participation signal a wider shift in trends in journalism, and as a result, new systems have been created in an effort to adapt (Usher, 2016).

In addition to economic difficulties, it has also been suggested that the professional culture in the journalism industry stands in opposition to innovation. In Ryfe's (2009) piece titled "Broader and Deeper," he discusses the various professional norms that have become at odds with change in the newsroom. In his ethnographic study of a newsroom experiencing change, he outlines the various professional rituals which have become disrupted by a new leader in the paper's newsroom. "I find that the culture of professionalism in the newsroom is remarkably resilient and resistant to change," he writes. "From the beginning, most reporters – even, or perhaps especially, the most experienced of them – had difficulty adapting to [a new editors] new guidelines." Though Ryfe's study is focused on the change in management, the same struggles apply to a change in newsroom technology. When anything interrupts workplace rituals, journalists struggle to adapt (Ryfe, 2009).

To understand how the newsroom can better adapt to these changes, it is necessary to understand how the learning process takes place within the newsroom. In understanding how the newsroom learns about its CMS, and how newsroom actors interact with it, the principles guiding the development of these systems will become more apparent. To accomplish this goal, we turn to the theory of communities of practice.

The communities of practice theory was coined by researchers in the fields of anthropology and education as means to study the learning processes of linked communities. “Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger-Trayner 2015).

The communities of practice theory holds that when a group of individuals comes together with a shared practice, their conversations and interactions form a shared pool of knowledge, from which others in the group can learn (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

A community of practice has a few key features that make it unique from other, similar groups. These three features are “a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain. (Wenger & McDermott, 2002).

All three of these features are present in the newsroom. For the purpose of this study, the domain of knowledge is CMS use by newsroom actors (the community). The shared practice consists of those strategies created to effectively use the CMS. Thus, this theory can serve as an effective method for studying CMSes. (Weiss & Domingo, 2010).

Applying the communities of practice theory to the newsroom allows the nuanced methods by which newsroom staff navigate their respective CMS – the conversations they have

with other staff, talks with developers, shortcuts for use – to be included in a shared pool of knowledge that developed between those in that newsroom community. This pool of knowledge grows informally, and the usage patterns of the CMS are directly influenced by the development and implementation of this shared information (Weiss & Domingo, 2010).

The goal of this study is to create a set of best practices for newsroom CMS development, and to determine the level of involvement the newsroom has in the development process. By examining how use and interaction take place within relevant newsroom communities, this is possible. Underneath the learning that takes place within the newsroom as a community of practice are goals that guide the process of learning, and those goals act as the source from which to build these best practices and determine how newsrooms can better be involved in the CMS development process (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

It is clear that newsroom innovation faces a laundry-list of internal and external challenges. The economic, organizational and professional obstacles make the implementation of new technologies a challenging affair. To reduce this difficulty, it is necessary for journalists across the industry to have some set of best practices to draw on when making CMS decisions. These best practices may already exist, but the rapid nature of CMS evolution means that they are constantly evolving alongside the technology, and must be identified.

Creating a set of best practices for the development of newsroom CMSes is only a starting point, meant to reduce innovation challenges in one area of the newsroom. These systems are crucial to the evolution of the newsroom and the rapid pace of change shows no signs of slowing (Paulussen, 2016).

Research goals after publication

This study could be published by number of organizations. Journalism industry-focused organizations, such as Poynter or the Society of Professional Journalists, frequently publish similar articles regarding the state of the industry. Academic journal publications, such as the “Sage Handbook of Digital Journalism,” could also be a potential destination.

The abundance of research of newsroom innovation makes it clear that technology will shape the future of the journalism industry. It is also clear that technology and journalism do not always agree. Those professional practices and rituals, combined with the increasing demands and goals of the field of journalism, often serve as an obstacle to the implementation of new innovations. Yet, no news organization can escape these trends.

Though there have been a handful of studies on the development of newsroom CMSes, the rapid rate of technological change requires frequent and updated research on these topics. The tools and technologies available, even eight years ago (during the Weiss and Domingo study in 2010), have drastically changed. This research hopes to start conversation about how newsrooms can better address issues of technology by establishing better practices through communication with actors responsible for the development of these tools.

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