

JOURNALISM THAT MATTERS
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New Interactive Formats For Journalism As Conversation

Convenor: Melinda Wittstock

Participants: Stacy, Karen, Cindy, Florangela

Summary: We set about to brainstorm what journalism might look and sound like in a new era of multimedia and interactive technology: What new formats could be explored? We talked about how the way people are using media is changing, what people really want from media, and how or whether good storytelling could adapt to the new technologies, such as IMing, Podcasting and cell phones. We all agreed that whatever was created it would have to be good – useful relevant information to specific audiences, technically good, trustworthy and reliable, and fun.

The conversation, in brief:

Cindy: It's crucial we find ways to rebuild conversation between citizens and elected representatives

Stacy: We need better research to find out how people are using the new devices, how they incorporate into lifestyles and what they want from each device.

Melinda: Technological change happening so fast, it is hard to do the research fast enough; sometimes people don't know what they want until it is offered to them, but nothing will work unless it is good and useful

Cindy: Reminds us of a story Jean told her about Korean elections and how text messaging in the last 24 hours changed the result

Melinda: Already the 'war rooms' of both Democrats and Republicans were relying on such high speed technology as they geared up for Supreme Court nomination fights; it is important technology and formats don't entirely get hijacked by interest groups or politicians, though that will always be an aspect. People have to know the difference of what they are getting – and from whom.

Stacy: News to phone is something AJC already doing

Florangela: There is a lot of potential on phone or Ipad – but it has to be personality driven. Think Jon Stewart on the Daily Show. I could imagine someone funny but smart reading the news on the phone or Ipad; it could have a 'cult' following. But probably has to be tailored to specific audiences and interests. MTV does news and elections differently to reach younger audiences, so this could too. You need to think of the audience: where they go, what they do. Think of Zone ESPN, they have TVs in stalls of bathrooms. People will always go see live music – so content could be very listings driven. But it would need to be narrowly focused.

Melinda: There could be listings, reviews, news, and a means for people to exchange ideas and news items back and forth, much like they IM gossip right now

Stacy: I can't imagine any interest in public affairs content on the cell in a music club, but on the other hand, in a Jon Stewart type format maybe.

Melinda: That's just it; it depends how you do it, how you tailor it. News doesn't have to be dull or boring. Also I think it needs to be tailored to affinity groups: say DC Urban Moms – there is a website, but it could do news that stretches from mommy and me classes to education and health stories.

Cindy: I don't think the NYT translates, but as long as it is news that affects your life, it could work.

Stacy: I'm agnostic about this; there has to be some point and purpose to the news

Florangela: It all needs to be very short, with new angles

Cindy: Oh My News format – invests people in content; they vote what they want more of; perhaps how the research works

Stacy: It needs involvement, it won't work unless there is buy-in and participaton

Karen: Immediate personal gratification

Melinda: Danger that stories people don't want won't get told – journalists have a responsibility to speak truth to power, hold it to account, and sometimes tell uncomfortable truths. But I also think it is a journalists job to make information engaging, interesting, understandable and enjoyable, even entertaining. It's to get people to think, not tell them what to think. I think there is a way to tell young people things about their world, by encouraging them to better observe their world, and share their thoughts with others. That conversation, coupled with reliable information they can pass on to each other...well there is potential here I think, but a lot of work to be done...

Stacy: Software exists to encourage and reward participation, but the 'evil' side of it is that they later get sold stuff

Cindy: Like old green stamps

Melinda: collecting stuff from cereal boxes

Karen: you can incentivize and build behavior patterns

Cindy: young people interested in Iraq, environmental issues

Melinda: another case of ready fire aim

Melinda: Asks others: what would you do? How would you do a story you are already working on differently if you knew it was for an ipod or cell phone?

Stacy: Is it a one way or two way communication?

Melinda: Could be either or both

Stacy: It has to be short, real time, not necessarily time sensitive – bring news in different contexts

Melinda: it might also be a way of bringing people back to newspapers, radio, TV or just to other internet sites, by whetting their appetite and encouraging them to want more

Karen: it could be viral

Melinda: people are naturally curious, but the onus is on the journalist to find better, new delivery systems to ensure people can get connected to things they didn't even know they were interested in

Karen: No one is linear anymore in the way they take news; it all has to interconnect

Cindy: My 24 year old son finds stuff and then wants to share with his friends, with me – he'll say, Mom, you gotta see this...People do share news, and that is an exciting aspect of the new technology in enabling conversation

Stacy: lots here to talk about...

Next Steps:

- Agreed that journalists from print and broadcast need to brainstorm story telling in a different way, to fit myriad technologies – from multimedia and interactive internet content, through to multimedia pod casts, cell phone, text message and IMing. Karen says it is important to see how stories can have “legs”, how they can travel.
- Ready fire aim: start small projects or experiments (Stacy says AJC providing text on phones; might add an interactive loop)
- Continue communication with this group and others from the retreat, and other folks – and try to create these new experimental formats
- Keep questioning!

Brainstorm Citizen Journalism Initiative

Convenor: Ken Sands

Participants: Sue Ellen Christian, Sarah Stuteville, Charlotte Hall, Matt Thompson, Jarah Euston, Dan Gillmor, Jan Schaffer, Lew Friedland

There are 39 citizen journalism initiatives listed here:

<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/002226.php>

What have we learned from those experiments, and what would the next iteration look like?

The committee threw out a lot of ideas, both specific and general. In the end, perhaps there were more questions than answers.

The original concept, offered up as a beginning point, was to have one neighborhood zone representing each elementary school boundary area as a means of identifying manageable neighborhoods that cover the entire geographic area, and are somewhat identifiable by the one common focal point -- the neighborhood school.

Here are some highlights:

Matt: Current TV is a good example of using TV for citizen journalism. Some documentaries are really good.

<http://www.current.tv/>

Lew: In Madison, he's convening how-to workshops for citizen journalists, and developing a curriculum that could be useful across the industry. It might be ready in a couple of months. Ken questions whether too much training will turn them into boring journalists with the same problems we have.

Lew: One question is whether citizen journalists should write with a point of view (one aspect of blogging that makes it so popular) or be like neighborhood beat reporters.

Jan: Before you launch, you must have a clear vision of what it will look like in the end. Contributors need a roadmap. She's found this to be the case in the citizen media initiatives her J-Lab organization is funding. http://www.j-lab.org/newvoices_pr3.html

Dan: You should pick a specific topic or neighborhood to start. Offer blogs to anyone who wants one. Have in-person training or meetups. Explain the revenue model, if there is one, so they understand why or why not they'll get paid and why they should help the media's profit margins. Make sure the site is populated with information -- nothing worse than an empty wasteland. Good idea to force people to use real names for stories and blogs, although pseudonyms might be OK for comments. If you allow reports to be wiki'd, put the editing on the facing page from the original.

Matt: You might want to try a Big J journalism project on a community scale. Perhaps dozens, hundreds or even thousands of citizen journos could do the necessary ground work to develop a big story one small piece at a time.

Dan: You need to provide the best possible portal to everything else going on in the community. Aggregate links. You could have maps that annotate, such as where locations are in the community with bad potholes. And you could ask readers to provide the photos of the potholes to feed the annotated map.

Jarah: Whatever else, it needs to hve arts and entertainment.

Sarah: I like the idea of people writing their own review of music and movies.

Jan: You could create 5 zones of participation: Civic zone (been there, saw this, 360 degrees, art buttons, fix this), getting smarter (report card, elections, issues, homework, pissed off), my mom (my music, my movies, my sex, cheap eats, civic passions, pissed off), see this (photos, videos, pissed off) and making it happen (non-profits, research, results, values in action, volunteer needs).

Jarah: Like the notion of "ready aim fire" in that in doesn't have to be so heavily compartmentalized. It doesn't have to be hidden behind neighborhood doors. People who don't have kids won't identify with the neighborhood-by-school definition. Don't be preordained in how you set this up.

Matt: People are much more likely to coalesce around areas of interest, local utility, than artificial school boundaries. You need to have a sense of your audience.

Charlotte: What about accountability? Credibility and accuracy? How is it edited? Branded? Acknowledge and understand these issues.

Matt: Let the readers define the standards.

Ken: My conclusion: perhaps the "ready fire aim" (or RFA) approach would work with this. Release it in "beta" form just like Google always does. Invite citizen input. Heck, maybe the readers help formulate the definition and design from the beginning with "open source" meetings from the beginning.

Working title:
RFA Spokane
you design/you define/your community

Coincidentally, while we were meeting in Kalamazoo, the Poynter Online News listserv was humming with comment over this Online Journalism Review article:
<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/051006/>

My question is what to do next to learn from those experiments.

Establish Journalism Day of Atonement to:

- 1) Express love for what we do
- 2) Ask Forgiveness for sins committed in the name of journalism
- 3) Pledge to do better

Convenor: Dale Peskin

Participants: Peggy Holman, Nancy Margulies, Kate Olsen, Stephen Silha

- 1) This idea is more than journalism --

Global Day of Forgiveness (Kate)

- 2) Find commonalities of being "one"

Day of Oneness (Unity)

At-one-ment

How to sustain the energy and connectedness of the group so as to generate action?

Convener: Jim Shaffer

Note taker: Jim Shaffer

Initial attendees: Ralph Gage, Bill Krasean, Nora Paul, Chris Peck, Steve Silha, Dueane Stoltzfus,

What future action?

Ralph: Here's a wild ass idea: I know _____, Chris's brother, who's a hardworking journalist at a small daily. Hasn't had a day off in years, why not create a SWAT team of journalism professors and students that could take over his paper for a week and give him a vacation? The idea would be a match people with portable skills that need experience with temporary experiences.

Duane: Another idea would be to develop an economic template – a cookbook – for journalists that don't know the business side to fill out the blanks and test the economics of the new venture ideas.

Bill: I'd like to see a website that connects us all. Who's doing this now?

(Dan earlier volunteered to add this to his school's site with links. Need Dan.)

Nora: We need to free ourselves up with a planning grant ...

Steve: Kellogg said they were interested.

Nora: Would like to do more research on different models of news "ownership."

Chris: We need to re-think who needs to be connected to develop last night's idea.

Several: Let's ask Fetzer to help us flesh out last night's idea and write a grant proposal to Kellogg.

90-day window?

Nora: We need a real live organization to work with.

Chris: So we need to

1. Identify and convene the key people to flesh out the vision
2. Polish the vision
3. Go for some foundation money to plan
4. Go for a existing news org partner that needs help with the

future

(Peggy Holman joins)

Nora: Thinking about Forum Communications, they might say, "Take our newsroom ..."

Several: Averse to big media organizations. Too slow ... Need agile partners.

Peggy: Too soon to choose target partners?

Jim S: Could at least choose criteria as part of the grant proposal. Fetzer can help us find ...

Duane: Remember PM in NYC? It attracted energy and talent from many journalists. Such experimentation DOES tie with healthy journalists.

Ralph, Chris: (Once the planning grant \$\$ is in) start with a specific proposal to a target organization. Ralph: Caveat! First one or two shouldn't be in a competitive market. Need fault tolerant environments.

Peggy: Create a model that would help ...others ... rescue markets.

Nora: Like college towns. Receptive to journalism.

Peggy: Editor of Biloxi looking ...

Jim S: Switching subjects, how to keep the connectedness?

Peggy: Perhaps a monthly conference call, open to all interested ...

JS: Combine with dynamic website for all to watch during the call?

(Dan Gilmor joins, Jim reviews)

Dan: Can offer a group blog w/ discussion capability, maybe internal e-mail

Nora agreed to work with Dan to set up a community site, categories include:

Healthy Journalists

New economic models

Duane: Be sure to allow for personal connection

Ralph: Make it searchable so we can go back and extract... interest... around various topics

(Lew Friedland joins)

Dan: Keep this private? Or allow public.

(discussion)

Peggy: Whoever comes is the right person ...

Chris: But need to clarify the purpose of the site ...

Nora: 3 threads?

Continuing the work of this retreat

Planning for a project
World wide white board

(Linda Grdina joins)

Peggy: Q is how “contained?” The energy sits in the room, but more a field than a bowl.

JS: Time’s almost up. Let’s review Monday morning tasks.

1. Ask Fetzer for one more round with eye toward creating
Foundation \$\$
Operating partner
Platform for continuing this energy
And PROJECTS
2. Nora and Dan to work on web-based communications platform. (Peggy to be available to advise.)

"Co-op Newsroom"

Convener: Jonathan Lawson

Participants

Silja Talvi
Lisa Cohen
Eric (from Fezter)
Jane Ellen Stevens

Conversation morphs more into a strategy of how to bring members of media together to talk about issues in a given locale; Seattle is used as the primary example. Also relates to bringing media issues to the public.

Discussion of community media in Seattle: Public Affairs Program/KBCS, Ethnic Press (Colors, Seattle Medium, International Examiner, etc.), Community Newspapers (dozens of neighborhood papers), Real Change (homeless/working class biweekly paper), in addition to traditional news outlets and independents (PI, Seattle Times, Weekly, Stranger, Evergreen Monthly), and dozens of even smaller specialty publications.

We need an infrastructure to help bring journalists together, and not just to drink and schmooze (a la Media Bistro), so that they have a stake in producing good media. Also interested in bringing together people who are motivated by social justice considerations and professionalism.

Amplifying existing journalism, and helping to get the word out about good works already being done.

A lot of the institutional structure probably already exists to provide meeting places for these gatherings, including community centers, organizations, churches, congregations, universities, colleges, 826 (in both Seattle and SF). Seattle Times? Problem, there, is partisan nature ... a lot of PI folks won't attend, and vice versa if the situation was reversed.

Seattle Center?

So, what would it take for people to come together?

Lisa: For me, it's appealing because I would love the opportunity to share those core values with younger people.

Promote idea of mentorship, "there's no shortage of journalists to do this." There's so much frustration out there, and there's so much that's possible.

The predominant fear is still that new and old media do not have the same standards. "It will be a real challenge getting past those attitudes."

Jonathan: idea of a monthly seminar series? (Wide agreement on how good an idea it would be.)

Whoever the organizers are, they have to be open-minded and willing to work with various groups/news orgs/perspectives.

Eric: There is a fertile crescent b/w new and old media, and they really can work together ...

Monthly symposium, perhaps including presentations on media justice; journalism training; writing tips; dealing with trauma/emotional struggle (DART center; how to multisource good stories; ethics; adverts and their role in media; ethnic press; consolidation; literacy.

possibility of getting institutional support/funding? A Territory Resource, Vanguard, Newspapers, Rockefeller, J-Lab, Seattle Social Justice Fund, Pew, Kellogg, MacArthur, Mott, Ford, Poynter, Neighborhood city funding, Seattle Foundation.

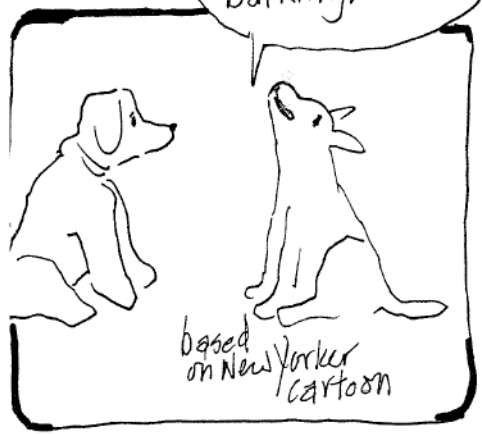
The Journey

NEXT:
I need
a personal
retreat

Journalism
is conversation
of
Democracy

Audience is
the content.
We become
content to
each other
- Gene

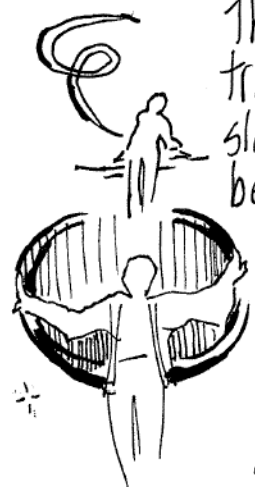
I tried blogging
for awhile, but
I decided to go
back to pointless
barking.



based
on New Yorker
cartoon



Your liberation is
bound to mine. Let's
work together.



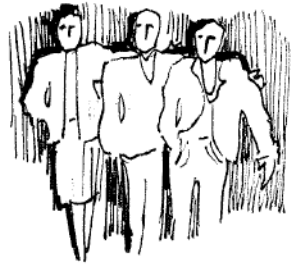
The future
transforms us
slowly, long
before it happens.
based upon
Rilke quote

Dwelling
in
POSSIBILITY

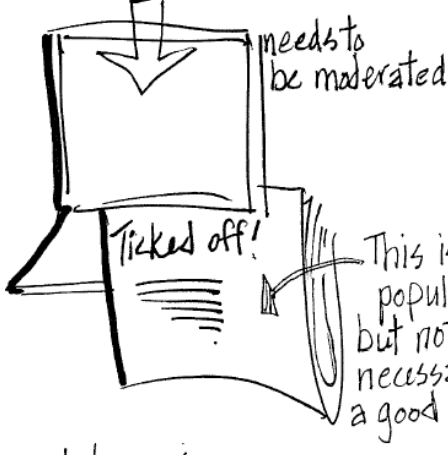
Alliances are
best when
there's less
threat

Forget going
for a Pulitzer &
go for a NOBLE
PEACE
PRIZE

Project:
"Chat the Planet"
Youth speak out
from around
the world
- Dale Peskin



BLOG
Invitation
Come here.
Rant & Rave

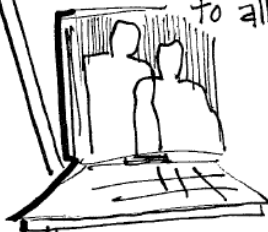


check out

Film: Scared Sacred
by Velcro Ripper
google: "scared sacred"

SUN. 2

Blog: need to define audience
& focus
we can't be one thing
to all people.



Let people
interact & set
standards

"Ready, fire, Aim"

"RFASpokane/
BETA"



New blog
by us, the
newspaper
in Spokane,
linked in some way
to the paper...

Community blog for
citizen journalism



- ✓ Accuracy
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Transparency

Will do citizen
journalists adhere
to these principles?

YOU design
YOU define
your community



Because
I've expressed
myself all I can
in this particular
medium.



- Connect local community radio & newspapers
- Monthly seminar series for community media journalist development
- "Big Brother/Sister" for retired journalists & new/citizen "

Evolution of projects →

- Powerful call
- Tentative steps
- (failure/opportunity)
- Someone holds the strong intention of initial call

NEXT STEPS:

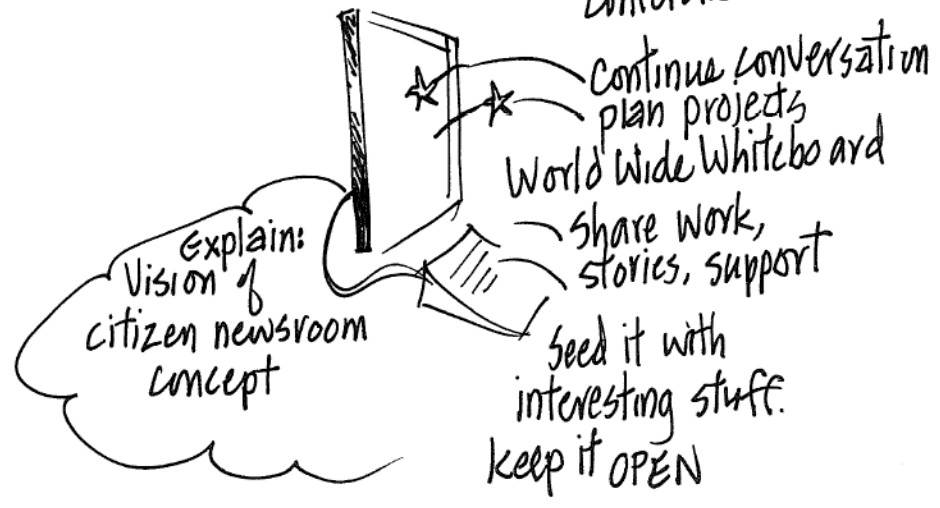


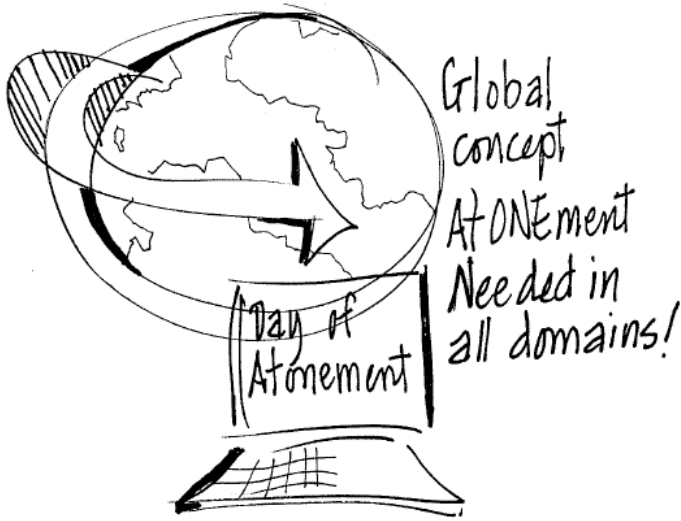
- ① → Foundations
- Partnership with small, agile media company

- ② Website Dan & Nora will set up on-going with, perhaps, conference calls

- How can story be told & formatted (multi-media, etc.) to appeal to younger audiences?
Continue to brainstorm

- Digital Story Lab at U. of Minn. study various methods of delivery... which work best (on line story forms)





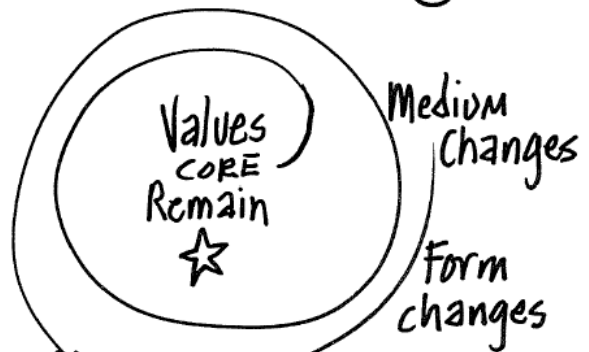
DART
Web site for journalist trauma

Can we move beyond survive - to THRIVE?



Do visit us!
MediaCenter.org/digitalthink

"REJOURNALISM"
Case studies



HOPE

~~Misery loves company~~