



Will SPJ Remain Relevant in the Digital Age?

*A report by the
Society of Professional Journalists'
Digital Media Committee*

October 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: About the SPJ Digital Media Committee and the Report	1
Summary of Findings	1
Conclusions and Recommendations	4
Ken Doctor, Content Bridges.com	5
Joshua Benton, Nieman Journalism Lab	6
Josh Breitbart, New America Foundation	7
Clay Shirky, New Media Thinker, Author	8
Wendy Ruderman and Barbara Laker, <i>Philadelphia Daily News</i>	9
Mike Fancher, The Aspen Institute	10
Howard Owens, TheBatavian.com	11
Mark Luckie, <i>Washington Post</i>	12
Jay Rosen, New York University	13
Tom Rosenstiel, Pew Research Center	14
Alan Mutter, Media Analyst	15
Rick Edmonds, Poynter Institute	16
Mark Briggs, Journalism2.0.com	17
Joe Skeel, SPJ Executive Director	18
Hagit Limor, SPJ President, 2010-11	19
Working Journalists	20
Digital Media Training Overview	21
Members of the Committee	22

ABOUT THE SPJ DIGITAL MEDIA COMMITTEE

The Society of Professional Journalists' Digital Media Committee conceived and authored this report to help the Society plot its future course. SPJ conducts much of its business through appointed committees, and the 2009-10 SPJ Digital Media Committee had a busy year. The Committee included one former and one current new media editor (Jeff Achen and Hilary Fosdal), a seven-time Emmy-winning broadcast journalist (Rebecca Aguilar), a public relations professional who won 14 state journalism awards during a five-year newspaper career (Daniel Axelrod), a Knight Media Policy Fellow at the New America Foundation (Jessica Durkin), the *Chicago Tribune's* former social media coordinator (Amanda Maurer), an investigative online journalist (Jennifer Peebles) and a veteran *Boston Globe* staff writer (Emily Sweeney). Last fall, SPJ President Kevin Smith appointed Fosdal, the Committee's chairwoman, who assembled this year's Committee.

In 2009-10, the SPJ Digital Media Committee's duties included:

- Revamping the Committee's charter.
- Submitting testimony on behalf of SPJ for the Federal Trade Commission's future of journalism study.
- Submitting testimony on behalf of SPJ for a similar Federal Communications Commission report.
- Creating two comprehensive Digital Media Handbooks with tips on how to use new media.
- Hosting the event "Google 101 for Journalists: Getting the Most from the Web."
- Recruiting Google to fund and speak at the SPJ convention.
- Blogging at Net Worked.com.
- Tweeting at spj_dmc.
- Regularly writing columns for SPJ's *Quill* magazine.
- Hosting the event "Hyper-Local Journalism: Inside the Patch" with AOL.

Some of the Committee's goals include providing SPJ and the journalism industry with information, analysis and advice on the latest digital media news, trends and issues; shaping SPJ's official positions on new media and digital media-related issues; and helping journalists gain the necessary skills to be employable.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

America's oldest and largest journalism organization should become the media's primary source of information about the efficacy of the latest journalism tools, technologies, approaches and business models. The Society of Professional Journalists also should become the premier place new media start-ups go to network and share ideas.

Those are the top two recommendations of SPJ's Digital Media Committee, an SPJ-appointed group of digital media experts, who spent 2010 creating the report "Will SPJ Remain Relevant in the Digital Age?" The Committee spoke with more than a dozen media experts and journalists whose excerpted interviews make up the bulk of the report.

Committee members also solicited information from a broad range of stakeholders across the media spectrum, from students and academics to freelancers, new media journalists and those in legacy media.

"Technology has offered incredibly simple, powerful tools that have turbocharged journalism," said Clay Shirky, an author, new media thinker and part-time New York University professor. "For SPJ, making journalists aware of the new super powers that are available to them would be an enormous service."

Training the 'write' way

When it comes to digital media, SPJ has primarily emphasized training its members to use hardware and social networking sites. This utilitarian approach has proven popular and responsive to members' requests in recent years.

But, following our findings, the Committee recommends that SPJ revamp its training curriculum to be more selective in its offerings and ensure it best meets journalists' needs.

SPJ should not abdicate its role in training journalists — continued training is the Committee's fourth of 10 recommendations. However, the Society must recognize a number of organizations provide comparable digital media training.

So, besides teaching journalists how to use equipment, SPJ should focus more on the reasons why newsrooms should use it, said Mark Luckie, national innovations editor for *The Washington Post* and author of the blog 10000words.net.

And SPJ's training should involve technology that allows journalists to simplify concepts and applications that bring reporters closer to the citizens who can help them gather and make sense of information, said Shirky.

Yet, SPJ's training need not focus on technology alone. With its over-abundance of information, the Internet has paradoxically made it more difficult to find accurate news created in an ethical, professional manner.

As a result, lessons in the basics of journalism are still critical, said SPJ President-Elect Hagit Limor, who came to the same conclusion as Wendy Ruderman and Barbara Laker, *Philadelphia Daily News* reporters who shared the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting.

Bridging the media divide

The best way for SPJ to bridge the divide between old and new media is for the Society to become the most trusted source of information about technological trends, business models and journalism industry information, said Ken Doctor, a media analyst and author of the blog Content Bridges. Doctor and the other experts said the journalism world is crying out for a signifier of journalistic quality.

"SPJ could be a bridge between what is, what has been and what's coming," Doctor added. "SPJ could be a town square for new and old media."

In that vein, SPJ should find and evaluate the latest tools, technologies, theories and approaches for journalists "so they don't all have to be early adopters," said Jay Rosen, a New York University professor and author of the blog PressThink.

Such information is currently spread among dozens of sources, and its quality and quantity vary greatly. SPJ can fill a void by aggregating and curating a website with multimedia news and information. SPJ also could become a vocal authority on new media by employing a hyper-literate digital media expert and issuing press releases.

In addition, there's significant room for SPJ to spotlight journalistic quality based on the ethics and professionalism of online journalism practitioners, said media analyst Alan Mutter and Mike Fancher, *The Seattle Times'* former executive editor.

Public engagement will be critical in that regard.

"Today, there is so much propaganda from so many different directions attacking the core of journalism that we have to get at why journalism matters, what our standards are and how we hold ourselves accountable," Fancher said.

Serving new media needs

These efforts, and a concerted push to meet the needs of online and entrepreneurial journalists, are necessary to keep SPJ's ranks full. SPJ needs more online journalists to inject new blood into an organization that is still stereotyped as too legacy-media oriented.

"The more SPJ becomes a special pleader on behalf of a threatened profession, the less interesting and important it is," Rosen said. "The Society should focus more on the practice than the profession, the 'what' not the 'who,' and trying to improve upon the practice of journalism wherever it is found."

In the Wild West of new media, one way to recruit online journalists and those who run start-up journalism sites would be to provide a strong, popular network for them to share information.

"Whoever makes the move to become the institutional network for online start-ups will be well-positioned for the next 20 years," said Joshua Benton, director of Harvard University's Nieman Journalism Lab. "There's a real need for a place where people can feel more comfortable saying, 'This worked. This didn't work.'"

Breaking the silence

But when it comes to “net neutrality,” greater broadband access and a host of other hot-button digital media issues, SPJ has not yet stood to be heard. Without a free, open and fast Internet, SPJ’s efforts to gain a national shield law and open records reforms will be frivolous.

That’s because more than 35 percent of Americans do not use the Internet at home, and 30 percent do not use the Internet at all, according to a recent survey by a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce. At the same time, more than 40 percent of Americans lack broadband access at home. And the needs of special interests don’t dovetail with closing the digital divide.

All of this “may seem a little far afield to take a journalism institution,” said Joshua Breitbart, senior field analyst for the New America Foundation’s Open Technology Initiative. But “it’s important for age-old journalism institutions to remember that journalism has always been just as concerned with the distribution and infrastructure levers of content delivery as the content layers.

“Journalism is an institution, like health care, that’s really supposed to serve the entire population,” Breitbart added. “When it does, you have a healthier, better informed society, but we’re really in danger of allowing the transition to digital/online journalism to exacerbate historic inequalities in access to information.”

Identifying and overcoming challenges

SPJ must perform balancing acts to fulfill these and other recommendations from its Digital Media Committee. The 101-year-old Society must find the funds to achieve new goals and reconcile the need to serve its members with the organization’s obligation to better journalism for all.

Luckily, as SPJ’s elected leaders look to the future, they’ll be able to draw upon expertise of the group’s 8,200 diverse members — a third of whom are students while most of the rest are working journalists, representing every media platform.

As SPJ concocts the organization’s digital media strategy, the Society will need to diversify its funding base outside its foundation and collaborate more with other major journalism organizations, said Executive Director Joe Skeel.

“I think the question to ask is, ‘Does SPJ want to be the organization that takes a lead role in fostering the future of journalism?’” Skeel said. “I think we’ve been content to simply take the role of ensuring our members are ready for the future of journalism. With that said, though, we still do consider ourselves the leading journalism organization in the country.”

Daniel Axelrod

Vice Chairman, SPJ Digital Media Committee

President, Keystone Pro Chapter

September 2010

Conclusions and recommendations

THE COMMITTEE CONCLUDES THAT SPJ SHOULD:

A. Become the leading new media information provider and network for journalists.

- Opportunities abound for an aggregator and curator of ideas, innovations and trends in the new media world.
- New media journalists are searching for a reliable source of information about successful techniques and approaches.
- Entrepreneurial journalists need a well-structured forum to exchange ideas and network.

B. Uphold professional and ethical standards of journalism.

- Citizens and journalists need professional and ethical standards for gathering and disseminating the news.
- SPJ should be the watchdog against unscrupulous operators who pretend to practice journalism.
- Lessons on basic storytelling, writing and investigative journalism techniques are more critical than ever.

C. Serve as a vocal advocate for preserving the free flow of information in the digital age.

- The Internet must remain open and unrestricted for all.
- All citizens deserve access to a speedy Internet connection.
- Without digital literacy, like journalism literacy, democracy and innovation suffer.

TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT SPJ:

1. Bridge the divide between new and old media by aggregating and spotlighting high-quality journalism and facilitating communications among online start-ups and legacy media.
2. Create a vibrant network for new media start-ups to share ideas online and in person.
3. Take stands on hot-button digital media issues affecting the future of information sharing. Become an advocate for expanding access to the Internet, news and information.
4. Teach reporters to use powerful emerging technologies, from software to websites and gadgets capable of providing greater depth to stories and increasing public participation.
5. Educate members and citizens in the basics of journalism because proper information-gathering and storytelling techniques are more important than ever in the digital age.
6. Engage journalists and the public in a robust dialogue about the purpose, value and standards of journalism. Build public understanding of and trust in journalism, and educate citizens so they can practice journalism ethically.
7. Train media start-ups in entrepreneurial journalism by hosting seminars, producing regular magazine articles, creating convention programs and providing training opportunities on everything from sales to web development.
8. Teach journalists and their managers the theories behind why they should use new media technologies and examples of best practices, rather than just providing lessons about how to use equipment.
9. Ensure staff and leaders are hyper-literate in digital journalism trends and new media theories so they can anticipate what members will need to know.
10. Poll membership to determine and address journalists' needs, and track and respond to the journalism industry's direction.

Recommendation #1: Bridge the divide between new and old media by aggregating and spotlighting high-quality journalism and facilitating communications among online start-ups and legacy media.



Ken Doctor

Media analyst,
blogger at
Content Bridges,
author

“What is the market need? Every journalism organization is asking itself that question, and they have to. Is there anything unique that anyone isn’t approaching? What is needed most are connections between the new journalists and the old journalists. Look at the world I cover as an analyst. I cover the traditional daily newspaper industry and new media — the MinnPosts and the Texas Tribunes of the world. All these start-ups have common interests and beliefs. But, in general, they’re not talking to each other enough. New media start-ups see the world separately as ‘the old world’ and ‘the new world’ of journalism. But SPJ, as a pro journalism organization, doesn’t separate the two worlds. It simply believes more good journalism is better than less good journalism no matter where it comes from.

“SPJ can look for ways to convene new journalism organizations with veteran journalists around two issues. One issue is all these various codes, codes of conduct and ethics. We need them more than ever in the new journalism world — more so for the readers than for the reporters because people are confused now that all these new brands are out there. California Watch is a project out in the Bay Area that comes out of the Center for Investigative Reporting. They’re starting to place their journalism in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. So, you have examples of funding new journalism and placing it in new media to the benefit of both. An organization like that is doing what SPJ could do. It’s helping to convene and be a bridge between what is, what has been and what’s coming.

“SPJ could be a ‘town square’ for new and old media. Look at what Google does and what The Huffington Post does. What does ‘town square’ and ‘aggregation’ mean within the defined community? If SPJ was to try to be a bridge between old and new media, one way would be to bring a well-edited aggregation of good content to the fore. Then, you’re really magnifying the impact because you’re trying to approach an audience in a very inclusive way and providing people with a product that informs them about what’s going on.”

Recommendation #2: Create a vibrant network for new media start-ups to share ideas online and in person.



Joshua

Benton

Director of the
Nieman
Journalism Lab
at Harvard
University

“The fundamental shift we’ve seen with the birth of online journalism is a blurring between whether it’s journalists or journalism we’re interested in serving. It used to be pretty easy to identify people who committed acts of journalism. It was the people with salaries traceable to news organizations. Now, because the power to publish is so dispersed, there are small acts of journalism committed all the time by people who wouldn’t fall under the term ‘SPJ member’ 15 years ago. SPJ’s traditional role has been closer to the journalist. It’s not the publishers’ association or a conglomeration of bigwigs. You need to ask yourself, ‘Are we still interested in the individual or the industry?’

“There are way too many start-ups going up now that are making the same mistakes other start-ups have made. There is a need for the news start-ups to have a place to share information. If you start something up in Topeka, you should be able to network and tell others about your experience. It’s difficult (to create such a network) because this Wild West new media environment has legitimately been opposed to institutionalization. But I feel like whoever makes the move to become the institutional network for online start-ups will be well-positioned for the next 20 years. There’s a real need for a place where people can feel more comfortable saying, ‘This worked, this didn’t work. This is what we used for our backend system. This is how we set up our advertising sales staff. This is how we used social media.’ I think it also would make perfect sense for SPJ to move in the direction of being a signifier of journalistic quality. That’s not

necessarily what I’d advocate SPJ put its resources toward, but it matches up well with SPJ’s traditional mission (of promoting the practice of high-quality, ethical journalism). The only time you hear about the SPJ’s ethics policy is when a news organization says they’re following it or when someone uses it as a weapon to proclaim someone has not acted ethically. But SPJ could be like the ‘Good Housekeeping’ seal.”

Recommendation #3: Take stands on hot-button digital media issues affecting the future of information sharing. Become an advocate for expanding access to the Internet, news and information.



**Joshua
Breitbart**

Senior field analyst for the New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative

“A lot of people who present themselves as being at the cutting-edge of journalism are very widget-focused. They seem to imagine there’s an app or algorithm that can replace the human aspect of media. And, in fact, there are eerie parallels between the industrial revolution and the impacts on manual labor and how technology is impacting journalism and causing the elimination of jobs. But I think the missing element at this point is the huge impact that is coming — and we’re starting to see it in the extension of the online space — of the ‘next billion people.’ Those are people who’ve been excluded from the Internet. Reaching them (with the Internet, news and information) is the key for a number of reasons. One, it’s ethical. Journalism is an institution, like health care, that’s really supposed to serve the entire population. When it does, you have a healthier, better informed society. But we’re really in danger of allowing the transition to digital/online journalism to exacerbate historic inequalities in access to information.

“The greatest way for SPJ to remain relevant would be to address those divisions in the coming century. We’re seeing a huge technological shift, but also a big demographic shift. It would be that intersection I’d focus on from the ethical standpoint of working to ensure the media serves the whole community. That sort of focus is also a strategic differentiator from some of the more technological determinism or widget-obsessed institutions. There’s a lot of work to be done in the digital divide, including promoting broadband adaptation. The potential to develop new models for practicing and distributing journalism and sustaining existing journalism enterprises all depend on an open Internet.

“Closing the digital divide also can be done with digital literacy programs emphasizing that content producers have a stake in the design and the governance of (America’s digital) infrastructure. That may seem a little far afield to take a journalism institution, except that newspapers have always had a stake in the printing presses and trucks that deliver a newspaper. It’s always been vertically integrated, but I’d hate to lose that in the transition to a digital world. It’s important for age-old journalism institutions to remember that journalism has always been just as concerned with the distribution and infrastructure levers of content delivery as the content layers.”

Recommendation #4: Teach reporters to use powerful emerging technologies, from software to websites and gadgets capable of providing greater depth to stories and increasing public participation.



Clay Shirky

New media thinker, author, consultant, part-time professor at New York University

“Our 21st century model said, ‘We’re going to use people who work for us to produce the news. Machines will reproduce and distribute the news, and people who don’t work for us will consume the news.’ Those were the pieces, and that was the conveyer belt that carried them. There is not one single person looking at a Web-native start-up today that’s making that same calculation now that all three of those elements are used to produce the news — not just to reproduce, disseminate and consume it. Technology has offered incredibly simple, powerful tools that have turbocharged journalism, but those tools been virtually ignored outside financial reporting. There have been revolutions in the ways journalism can be reported both in gathering and making sense of the story and in communicating and clarifying the information for the public. But the traditional media have been incredibly slow to pick up on them. My students don’t understand why people don’t always adapt a new technology. I always tell them, ‘It’s difficult, and it makes you feel stupid.’ Every bit of the deck is stacked against adopting a new technology, and yet, if you can lower the burden of adopting a new technology people suddenly have super powers. For SPJ, making journalists aware of the new super powers that are available to them would be an enormous service.

“If I could wave a magic wand and do anything for working journalists, I’d say, ‘Here’s how you produce a basic set of charts and graphs from data.’ When you read an op-ed or analysis pieces about the economy, Republicans are always talking about ‘average income’ and Democrats are always talking about ‘median income.’ Those are two radically different things. But the media never explains, nor do the publishers ever say, ‘The median is middle. Here’s what the average is, and the average is always going to be twice as high in a market economy.’ If you just had a picture or graph of the income distribution, the confusion would go away. So it’s essential to teach journalists the basics of a database, literally just how to make charts in Excel. Then, those words could no longer be used to obfuscate the issue. For now, everyone has been getting a free ride because we don’t tell factual and mathematical journalism with pictures.

“If you go into a CEO’s office to see what they see about their businesses, they’ll show you so many numbers projections, second-quarter numbers and color-coded sales maps. But journalists tell a bunch of stories with numbers in them and we don’t present the graphs that would make them comprehensible. (SPJ can) take reporters and say, ‘We’re going to get you reporters to understand what it means to make an interactive map of all the Congressional spending. We’re going to teach you to pull an Application Programming Interface.’ As an experiment, (SPJ could) give a journalist 10,000 pages of PDF files, and say ‘We’re going to give you a Mechanical Turk account (such as Amazon’s crowdsourcing service), and teach you how to extract data so you can see which of the strategies worked best.’ (SPJ should) help (reporters) realize that they have the ability to understand what a database is telling them about the news.

“For years, reporters have been trying to get three sources, as if that constitutes some kind of independent verification. But ProPublica is doing things where they use thousands of millions of data points to show patterns and identify what you can’t get from shoe leather reporting. Similarly, when you look at websites such as Spot.Us or KickStart, you see people working to support reporters. Look at ProPublica, and you see people coming together to try to participate and report the news. That’s the new thing the landscape is trying to digest. Look at how (crowdsourcing helped expose) the British Parliament members’ expense scandal.

Recommendation #5: Educate members in the basics of journalism because proper information-gathering and storytelling techniques are more important than ever in the digital age.



Wendy Ruderman & Barbara Laker

Investigative reporters at the *Philadelphia Daily News*, winners of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting for “Tainted Justice,” a series on a corrupt Philadelphia Police Department narcotics unit.

Wendy Ruderman: “One thing ‘Tainted Justice’ proved was that there isn’t any substitute for getting out of the office and getting back to basics. It’s still crucial to stories. We really proved the old-fashioned style is really important and relevant. You can’t just go out and shoot video and audio and come back and put that on the Internet and consider that deep investigative journalism. There isn’t any replacement for getting out of your newsroom and pounding the pavement, whether you do that with your camera or a notepad. I think journalists have to strike that balance, where maybe you team up with reporters who specialize in multimedia, to give them help in the things they already know how to do.”

Barbara Laker: “When I went to school, you got your experience at smaller papers and you worked your way up. And I think now, young people right out of college are starting at metro dailies, and they are learning at metro dailies, and you have to give them a crash course (in reporting) because they are expected to deliver. The nature of the beast is, they may not have the (basic reporting) techniques down.”

Ruderman: “A lot of the interns and a lot of reporters come in and they know a lot of multimedia, but they don’t really know how to put a story together or have the writing skills and interviewing skills.”

Laker: “It’s more the digging aspect of journalism they need help with. And when it’s a more involved piece, they need help putting it all together.”

Ruderman: “SPJ needs to do something for tech-savvy journalists who want to learn storytelling, basic storytelling, and what makes a story a story.”

Laker: Reporters still need to know “how to put a story together and make it sing and not have a story with holes in it. In our series we did a lot of good, and I think it went back to the basics. And I think there is a need and a want for old-school reporting.”

Ruderman: “It took me five years to get to a major metro daily paper. A lot of people now, they don’t learn from the foundation up — that you have to attend planning and zoning meetings. And a lot of them don’t know how the government works or the difference between the state legislature and the federal government or how to find records. Barbara and I are old-school reporters. I don’t know how the hell you go out and shoot video, edit audio and write a story. The watchdog part (of journalism) doesn’t just go away (in the digital age). I grew up in the Watergate era, and you want to get at what’s wrong. I think it matters that journalists know what a good story is and how to get it and what drives it.”

Laker: “From all the interviews we’ve done, we know that a lot of people are still interested in how to do investigative reporting.”

Recommendation #6: Engage journalists and the public in a robust dialogue about the purpose, value and standards of journalism. Build public understanding of and trust in journalism and educate citizens so they can practice journalism ethically.



Mike Fancher

Vice president,
Washington
Coalition for
Open
Government;
retired executive
editor, *The Seattle
Times*; Aspen
Institute writer

“In a world where anybody can be a publisher, I think SPJ can answer the question, ‘Why should society value journalism and journalists?’ I think it does come down to our mission. What are our standards? What’s our identity as journalists? I think those are obvious starting points. Journalists of the past learned much of their values in school, but their best education in values is in the newsroom. As fewer and fewer people have the opportunity to work in a newsroom setting, who do they have that conversation with? Where does that conversation happen? SPJ could be having those conversations and recognize those conversations are so vital. And the public should participate in those conversations.”

“A whole other component of public engagement is news literacy. My generation of journalists felt very little obligation to understand what people grasp, how we did it and what we did. We took for granted that we knew its value and the value would speak for itself. But today there is so much propaganda — from so many different directions — attacking the core of journalism — that we have to get at why journalism matters, what our standards are and how we hold ourselves accountable.

“An unintended consequence of the journalist as gatekeeper is that journalists came to be seen as elite and apart from the public. And, in a world where anyone can get the information they want, that doesn’t work anymore. The important question is, ‘What are the values in journalism?’ There should be a rich dialogue on our sense of purpose. Given that public trust in journalism has eroded so dramatically over time, journalists should ask themselves, ‘Why should they trust us?’ ‘If we have that mandate of freedom, what responsibility do we have?’

“We have an opportunity with emerging technology to do more and better journalism than ever before if we take advantage of the ability to have the public work with us. The key is journalism that fully embraces public participation. By its very nature, it has greater potential to be more inclusive, more accurate, better trusted, more thorough and more helpful. There’s a rich opportunity to understand better how we’re perceived by the public, the values they want us to have and to blend their values and our values and come back with something better. But are we allowing the public to participate in that conversation?”

Recommendation #7: Train media start-ups in entrepreneurial journalism by hosting seminars, producing regular magazine articles, creating convention programs and providing training opportunities on everything from sales to web development.



**Howard
Owens**

Publisher of
TheBatavian.com;
former director of
digital publishing,
Gatehouse Media;
new media pioneer

“If the solution to the current disruption to media is to be found, it’s most likely going to be found by local entrepreneurs, because the cost structure in building a national chain is just so difficult and high. Right now, ad rates are so low you have to be able to run a low-margin business to get started and established. And who even knows if the Internet is so disruptive to traditional media that we’ll ever be able to make the kind of money that legacy media make? With all the financials stacked against being big in local markets, the revenue doesn’t scale. That’s a problem for big media companies or anyone who aspires to be a big media company. But as I think I’ve shown with The Batavian, small, two-people operations can generate revenue, make a living and do good journalism at the same time.

“Five years from now, The Batavian will be one of three things. One, me and my wife could just be doing it ourselves and having a good time. Two, we could be much bigger with a much higher profit margin. Or we’ll have burned out and be out of business because technology evolved and no longer made us viable. Any of those things could happen, but why is that an argument against (entrepreneurial journalism)? Would you have told Sergey (Brin) and Larry (Page), ‘There’s no business model, so don’t found Google?’ Would you have told the same things to James Gordon Bennett when the Penny Press came along and there was no model? No one knew that by mass producing and selling a bunch of papers for a penny each we’d come up with *The New York Times*.

“To me, SPJ can be a launching pad to create and educate potential entrepreneurial journalists. SPJ has a core mission of representing journalists and not management. And one of the primary functions of SPJ has always been as an educational institution. There’s a historic opportunity out there, an incredibly low barrier to entry (in beginning a new media start-up). This opportunity hasn’t really come along for the average working person in media since the 1830s. You couldn’t, throughout the entire history of local newspaper history, say that becoming your own local news publisher could easily be done. Look at when local radio came along, you could just go out and get a license if you had the money to get in the game. Now, for almost no start-up costs and just enough money to keep you in business you can get into the game.

“To me the wrong question is, ‘Are we going to be successful or will this just be little mom and pops down the road?’ It’s more about finding the opportunity and seizing it.”

Recommendation #8: Teach journalists and their managers the theories behind why they should use new media technologies and examples of best practices, rather than just providing lessons about how to use equipment.



Mark Luckie

National
innovations editor
for *The Washington
Post*, author, blogger
at 10000words.net

“Getting journalists in the mindset of understanding why they should use digital media is the important missing link. I firmly believe that the transition to the digital age starts at the reporter level. A lot of newsrooms are not training reporters as well as they can in what the tools are and how they can access them. But people are doing multimedia just for the sake of multimedia without understanding how it can grow the relationship between the readers and the paper or the viewers and the broadcaster. You can hit people over the head and say, ‘Learn how to use this camera,’ but if they don’t understand why they need to use it, what’s the good?”

“The people who really need to be reached are the holdouts who think they can’t make the transition into digital journalism. It’s not about being a backpack journalist. It’s about seeing what digital media tools fit into your day-to-day journalism. Training editors is also vital so they understand why to use digital media content and how analytics plays into things. More management-level people, and by managers I mean editors, need training in not just looking at those numbers but in understanding the meaning behind them. I don’t advocate throwing reporters into a weeklong multimedia training like the Knight Foundation does. Instead of having courses on blogging or videos, SPJ could do orientations where people sit down and learn how different media play a role in their jobs. SPJ could provide links on how to learn more about using digital media tools and what other organizations are offering in terms of training resources.

“I think that there is sort of a ‘wow’ factor for multimedia. The attitude is, ‘Now, we’re going to be doing this because everyone else is doing this,’ but people are not identifying how ‘this’ works for a particular newsroom. Are you doing photo slideshows and video that your readers want to watch? You can just do them, but are they good? People understand they should be using multimedia, but a lot of people are reluctant to do it themselves, and they don’t know where to start. When I first became a journalist, one of the reasons I fell in love with (the Poynter Institute’s) Romenesko (blog) is that he points out some of the good works out there. I think that if SPJ members could see the work other SPJ members are doing they could say, ‘A-ha.’ And they would realize, ‘It’s not just *The New York Times* doing this. There are actual newsrooms like mine that are doing great work.’”

Recommendation #9: Ensure staff and leaders are hyper-literate in digital journalism trends and new media theories so they can anticipate what members will need to know.



Jay Rosen

Professor at New York University, author, blogger at pressthink.org

“The genius of American democracy in a civil society in which people don’t just expect the government to do everything is that we have this third sphere of voluntary organizations, NGOs, professional organizations and nonprofits. I’d put SPJ in that tradition. The more SPJ becomes a special pleader on behalf of a threatened profession, the less interesting and important it is. The Society should focus more on the practice than the profession — the ‘what,’ not the ‘who’ — and trying to improve upon the practice of journalism wherever it is found.

“So, for example, the Citizen Media Law Center at Harvard’s Berkman Center is trying to research and be an advocate on legal issues for new media players. So, one of the things SPJ needs to do is catch up to what all these organizations are already doing in terms of their work. I think there’s a very steep learning curve for organizations like SPJ in that they need to educate themselves and their members much more in a new world that doesn’t resemble, in a lot of ways, the journalism landscape they’re familiar with.

Rather than defining what SPJ’s job is, catching up and learning is the most important thing — out of that could come a new role. Learning includes finding out what all the other journalism institutions out there are doing, but SPJ needs to do so with a new media focus.

“Another thing SPJ can do is to keep watch for new tools and technologies. SPJ can evaluate them and pick out the ones that really are useful and inform members about what some of the more early adapters of these tools are doing with them. Bringing some of this information to people is important so they don’t all need to be early adopters, but they can get some of the benefits from the people who are. That kind of watch would be good. Equipment, gadgets and software aren’t the only things that can be good. Approaches matter, too. I think the smartest thing that SPJ could do would be for the people who run the organization to be hyper-literate in the new digital world and show the way to become literate to their members. And if they put their efforts into that, then a lot more things SPJ could be doing would occur to them than the things I suggested.”

Recommendation #10: Poll membership to determine and address journalists' needs, and track and respond to the journalism industry's direction.



**Tom
Rosenstiel**

Former executive director, current vice chairman, Committee of Concerned Journalists

“I think the question you need to ask is, ‘What standing does SPJ have?’ There are lots of people now thinking about the future of media. Ten years ago, there weren’t people like Clay Shirky or even Alan Mutter, whose musings on the future of journalism generated much of an audience, because the future wasn’t in doubt. So, not only are there lots of experiments, but there are lots of voices out there huffing and puffing.

“So, what competitive advantage does SPJ offer in this? And what standing or brand does it have? On the one hand, you can emerge out of nowhere with no reputation if you have interesting ideas like Shirky, and you can get standing very quickly in a blog/Wiki culture by simply creating a blog that people link to and talk about. You can also create buzz by writing a lot, creating a lot of content, but to do either of those, you have to ask, ‘Is it something SPJ is capable of doing?’ ‘Does SPJ have a person that’s going to be a voice?’ ‘What is SPJ?’ ‘Why should anyone listen to this organization?’ SPJ represents old media, old standards, and you have an ethics code, but so does RTNDA and various places that also represent the media. What can a membership organization like SPJ contribute?

“One thing SPJ can do is to poll and canvas its members. SPJ can enlist its members in different ways. You can ask them, ‘What standards matter?’ You can ask them to canvas campuses. You have many eyes and ears. And, while it’s not a representative group, it’s sizable enough that its voice represents some cross section of the industry. That is the strength SPJ can play to — you have a large number of people you can mobilize as eyes and ears who can offer their attitudinal views on things. You do need to be realistic. SPJ has existed since (1909), and you don’t represent the new thing. So, you’ve got to both represent (old media), and use that as an asset without emerging as a grandma schoolmarm. You need to be people who are inventive.”

Recommendation: Vet popular new media journalists to ensure they gather and disseminate the news in an ethical, professional way. Publish the results online to highlight examples of spurious and high-quality journalism.



Alan Mutter

Media analyst,
blogger at Reflections
of a Newsosaur,
consultant, Silicon
Valley entrepreneur

“I’ve always thought of SPJ as being about ethics and good practices. One thing SPJ certainly could do is to try to help establish a code of ethics for the new media world. But if you want a big fat problem that no one is addressing, it’s the need to find and expel the bad actors (pretending to be journalists). SPJ could be a definitive news site. It could create a truth squad and spend money on the Web and find the malefactors of the new media. That would be a full-time job to keep you busy.”

“There are new websites and Twitter accounts that have a huge following, but the world doesn’t understand their source. Having confidence in the information we receive is important — from (Andrew) Breitbart to WikiLeaks it’s kind of a retro thing to worry about, but who are these people? What are they writing? What credentials do they have? What standards do they hold themselves to? These are massive questions that no one has tried to tackle. It would be something (for an online journalist) to be able to get an SPJ badge of approval to say, ‘I’m legit in the system.’

“Or what if there was a system with stars for journalists? This is not a small thing, but it seems very consistent with the traditional mission of SPJ. Nowadays, anybody can be a publisher and anybody is. People are self-assigned journalists. If some kid gets his hands on a document and puts it up on the web, it’s out there. You can’t fight that. But what would be valuable, if it could be done, would be to vet the individuals and establish some sort of a track record. Some guy writes a blog. Who does he work for? What’s his background? Why should I believe him?

“There are people in this Demand Media world stuck on the Web who would love to be certified as better than the average bear, and (companies) like to have people who are trained and vetted. I know the guy who runs Yahoo! News and their local news effort. How is he going to be sure that he’s getting guys who are going to be honest?

“I think all those (hyper-local new media start-up) projects are over done, and they can’t possibly get enough money to feed them all. What happens when the seed money they got runs out in three years? Most blogs don’t last more than five years. It’s hard work, and people do it for no good reason that I can think of, but I guess there’s always room for someone else to try it.”

Recommendation: Spotlight high-quality journalism that’s produced in an ethical manner and gird against the diminishing information-gathering standards among the proliferation of content farm websites.



Rick

Edmonds

Media analyst at the Poynter Institute, blogger at The Biz Blog

“I think there’s a lot of room for an organization that’s recognized for its commitment to journalism and journalism quality to call attention to things that are new and different — things that don’t spotlight our traditional definition of ‘journalism’ but they’re pretty good. SPJ has a reputation established to speak to ethical questions. As things come out that are noteworthy, SPJ could have a process where you have staff review them against a set of principles that come from your directors. But you’d have to be very quick if you enter the digital conversation now.

“*Sports Illustrated* used to do ‘Sport or Not a Sport?’ and they’d include rhythmic dancing, ultimate fighting, and they’d have a back and forth and argument about these things. Now, we have websites like Demand Media and Associated Content, but they are more insidious because they’re businesses that are a play-for-more-advertising. And, in essence, their model says, ‘Quality doesn’t matter.’ It’s similar to those really cheesy ads you see on most websites about teeth cleaners.

“If you look at where Poynter was and what we were teaching four or five years ago, we’re radically different. We have new topics now. We still have a writing teacher, Roy Clark, but one writing guy left us.

Our photography and design sections are now highly involved in digital media and producing film, and teaching those jobs to journalists who are still in transition. If SPJ is basically doing the same things it was doing five or 10 years ago, alarm bells ought to be ringing. I think the very central question for an organization like SPJ is, ‘How do we stay relevant?’ ‘What new things keep us in the thick of the action?’”

Recommendation: Spotlight successful new media business models and develop educational offerings to teach entrepreneurial journalism.



Mark Briggs

Ford Fellow in Entrepreneurial Journalism at the Poynter Institute, blogger at Journalism 2.0, author

“In the past SPJ was a membership organization for people who were already working in and getting paid to be journalists. Now, it has to become an organization that helps people who aren’t currently getting paid for journalism so that one day they can get paid. That’s the bridging between old and new media that needs to be done. A lot of these people in new media have different needs. Some people get the technology and how to publish online and build an audience, but they just don’t get how to turn that into revenue and make a business model out of it.

“Alan Mutter has written a fair amount on this and he says a lot of journalists who are out of work want to create the perfect job (when they start a journalism website). (They only want to be writers), but the key lesson they need to learn up front is to be professional and get paid you have to have a product and use a business model that makes sense. It has to make sense not just for you but for the public, too. So, most people need an understanding of the differences between a job and a business. You might have a terrific idea in the entrepreneurial world, but that doesn’t mean you have a service people will use or a product people will buy. SPJ can provide information, training and examples of case studies of all these lessons that show you what has worked what hasn’t work.

“I think there is a need for organizations like SPJ, but not in its current state. I stopped going to SPJ mixers in Seattle because it was mostly out-of-work freelancers looking for jobs and students. There were former newspaper people and life-long freelancers. SPJ has lost its sense of discovery. The past few times I went to an SPJ event I haven’t felt that sense. I do get that sense at the Online News Association events. Go to an ONA conference and there’s this overwhelming positivity and optimism, and people are just excited about journalism and the digital opportunities it’s bringing.

“The key now is for SPJ to tap into that optimism, lead the way to what’s promising. SPJ needs to attract the kinds of people into the organization who are behind promising projects, wherever they might be and in whatever form they might be. To me, the ideal state for the future of SPJ is to have a well-respected contest that honors innovative journalism and innovative business models. Start-up news organizations who want to say they are legit could have an SPJ seal in the footer of their information page so they can show readers, ‘I am a professional journalist.’ People should want to have the SPJ seal on their website in the same way that people want a ‘Good Housekeeping’ seal of approval.

SOCIETY'S LEADERSHIP ADDRESSES FUTURE

Editor's note: In October, SPJ will launch an "e-Campus," which it plans to regularly populate with short training videos on the use of multimedia tools and other journalism topics. Only members will initially be able to access the vignettes, but in the future the Society will consider allowing nonmembers to access the videos for a small fee.



Joe Skeel

Executive director,
Society of
Professional
Journalists

"I see the e-Campus being just a portion of our training efforts. We're using the digital tools we have available to get our training out. As we produce more training modules, we'll continue to provide them in a digital module. But e-Campus won't be SPJ's only focus when it comes to technology. Internally, we want to make sure we use every single tool available to get our message out, whether it's about training or press releases for news. We've already done a trial run, and in early September we'll have our first BlogTalkRadio. It'll be geared toward new members and folks who are renewing. We're doing one a month, and it's going to be very basic, 'Here's what SPJ is and here's how you can take advantage of your membership.' We'll expand that to have regular radio segments about all things SPJ — ethics, how to access public ethics and checkbook journalism. Really, the possibilities are endless. We're always looking for new ways to expose people to SPJ, so taking advantage of the technology that's out there is the first step for us. And we have not taken advantage of technology historically.

"I also know there are a lot of new start-ups out there, and they don't really know what they're doing and they're looking for advice and guidance and help. So, I'm wondering if we could host a small summit or conference, and these start-ups could network and commiserate and share ideas and we'd bring in experts. I feel like SPJ should do something different and special instead of just continuing our training programs.

Ultimately, the board and the foundation have to decide what we're going to do. We'd love to put SPJ out there to say, 'Hey, we're leading the way with the start-ups and the new media out there.' We've tried a few citizen-journalism academies to show them how 'trained journalists' do things, but they didn't go over well. This could be different if we identify people who are legit and real and reach the people who aren't just pajama bloggers who come to see what they can get away with before they get sued. If we could reach those people (who run new media start-ups), we could create a platform for people to come together.

"I think the question to ask is, 'Does SPJ want to be the organization that takes a lead role in fostering the future of journalism?' I think we've been content to simply take the role of ensuring our members are ready for the future of journalism. With that said, though, we still do consider ourselves the leading journalism organization in the country. The question is, 'Do we take on a larger role in the overall industry in terms of the new business models popping up and the new business ventures?' I think we can, if we get some help from other journalism organizations. We have to focus on making sure our members know the tools out there and the tools that are coming. The other side of it (addressing the future of journalism), we haven't jumped into full force.

"By and large, the staff's duty is to our members. Our members still want skills-based training — it's the number one requested newsroom training. What do we do if the majority of our organization is members calling and saying, 'Please teach me to use a Flip Cam' or 'What's the best way to use Facebook?' We're constantly balancing being the largest journalism organization in the nation and working to serve our members — 90 percent of the time those go together, but in the end it comes down to resources and where we put them. And that's always a challenge. Whatever the skills journalists need 10 years from now, SPJ will be leading the way to make sure we're providing training."



Hagit Limor

Society of
Professional
Journalists
president 2010-
2011;
investigative
reporter WCPO-
TV (ABC),
Cincinnati

“For SPJ to stay relevant in the digital age, training is obvious, both technical and business skills. But, above all, we can focus on what we do best. And that’s to reinforce what we have represented for more than 100 years: ethical journalism, fact gathering, getting all sides of issues, explaining why our fight for freedom of information is a fight for all citizens and journalists. We do this through journalism education via seminars, online through our ever-expanding training modules, and on a local level through chapters and programs for members and nonmembers.

“Yes, we do need to continue our technical training, but the basics are important to a degree that cannot be overstated, especially as citizen journalism joins the fray. We have to make sure people understand the basics of journalism — learning how to do the research, how to do your own journalism, much of what we do now already. We need to make sure new journalists learn the skills professionals use and that SPJ has taught for more than 100 years. In this respect, I think SPJ is set up to help new journalists better than most other organizations in that we already have the training in-house that new journalists need.

“What is radically different is the way we pass on the information. What isn’t, and shouldn’t be different, is the way we gather the information. I think some new journalists, having listened to and read journalistic commentary, may not realize that objective journalism is presenting all sides of the issue. I know this seems so basic for people already in the journalism business, but it’s not so basic to some people. The basics of journalism are nonchanging, so that will inform how we proceed with digital media training.

“More than ever (SPJ is necessary in the digital age) because now, we have the ability for almost anyone to engage in journalism. And they don’t need the journalism education that previously was necessary, either as a degree in school or more practically through a real-life experience in newsrooms where editors and producers were able to provide training on the job. Now, so many people are getting into journalism without the ability to have a newsroom professional or a professor as a mentor. SPJ is more able than ever to fill this educational gap.

“In addition, SPJ still fights for the overarching journalism principles — the shield law, the legal defense of journalists and citizens seeking public information. If we can’t get information, journalism and democracy suffer. Someone will need to lead that fight in the digital age and every age, and we will. What we can provide is the best bottom-line journalism training that new media specialists can’t get through formal education. We have the training modules in place locally through training programs we have around the country. We have it regionally through conferences, nationally through the conventions and online 24-7. We have it any way that’s most convenient for people.”

WORKING JOURNALISTS SPEAK OUT

Furhana Afrid spent five years as a backpack journalist and more than two years as a general assignment reporter/ anchor at KXLF-TV, the CBS affiliate in Butte, Mt.



Furhana Afrid

Freelance digital journalist,
Butte, Mt.

“I’m not a member of SPJ. In my particular situation, I was laid off about a year and a half ago. I’m already a member of RTNDA. I just signed up to be a member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists. And it’s expensive to be a member all these organizations. I would love to be a member of SPJ, but financially it’s not possible. I think they have to make it affordable for laid-off journalists to actually be members. In addition, they need to carve out a program for us at a low cost, so we can meet with recruiters.

“We have a lot of good skills — most of us (unemployed journalists) are marketable and we have multimedia skills, but we are trying to get our next job. We’re trying to get back into journalism. What can SPJ do to help laid-off journalists? Can SPJ help set up events where we can meet with recruiters and help us talk to news organizations where our skills are valuable? I also want to learn new ways of telling stories. So, if SPJ adds that to the list of things they already do, that would be a huge benefit for us. Anything that can provide training and help (broadcasters) acquire skills (would entice us to join). For example, RTNDA does weekly or monthly webinars. They tell you about the new changes taking place in journalism. It’s an excellent example of how they are staying in touch in the changes in journalism. One (webinar) SPJ could produce would be for Web journalism. Since we’re doing multimedia, give us a webinar on writing for the Web. How different is that from writing for television? What about) shooting for the Web? How different is that?”

“Give us a place where we can learn these skills. Bring in some experts on the webinar who have been doing Web journalism. What we need is hands-on skills. Show us how to do these things. What is the writing like? What tools do we need? There is so much of a focus on technology, but we still need to improve storytelling. The tools are there to enhance our work, but we still need to be better writers in crafting our stories. That would be a huge benefit to us because as journalists we don’t know it all. We’re still learning.”

Holly Ocasio Rizzo’s career of more than 30 years has included writer and editor positions at such papers as The Buffalo News, The Arizona Republic, the Press-Enterprise, The Desert Sun and the San Francisco Chronicle.



Holly Ocasio Rizzo

Writer, editor,
instructor,
Crestline, Calif.

“I was (an SPJ) member early in my career, (but not now). It doesn’t suit my needs as a freelancer. There are still good SPJ principles. I teach part-time and I can pass them along to my students. But I don’t feel I got as much professional development training. It may be just my perception, but that’s why I didn’t stick with SPJ. I think most journalism organizations tend to address people coming into the profession. We’re always interested in students. But there isn’t a lot of mid-career advice in what directions to take. We do a lot of networking, but not for career development.”

“If SPJ were to encourage me to join, current media training would be essential. It’s hard to get it on your own. If I can get it from one organization, that means a lot to me, and if I can get it in one place, like a conference, it’s a gold mine.

“Being able to connect with other people who do what I do (also is important). As a freelancer, I discovered that every freelancer’s business is different. We are all constituted in a different way, but we have similar business problems. We are entrepreneurs. We are small business people, and I would love to be able to connect with other small business people in media. We’re always looking for inexpensive and efficient ways to (pick up multimedia tools).”

DIGITAL MEDIA TRAINING OVERVIEW

The following is a sample of the digital media resources and training offered by a few other journalism organizations.

CUNY Graduate School of Journalism: CUNY offers Digital News Journalist, which it markets as “a service dedicated to providing students and professionals with tips, tools and resources to produce leading-edge multimedia journalism.” Digital News Journalist contains training and information on various digital media training topics. CUNY also recently announced a new master’s degree in Entrepreneurial Journalism. <http://digitalnewsjournalist.com>

Institute for Interactive Journalists: The institute runs J-Lab, which it describes as “an incubator for innovative, participatory news experiments and is a center of American University’s School of Communication in Washington, D.C.” J-Learning is funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The J-Lab website has assorted articles on digital media training topics. www.j-learning.org

Investigative Reporters and Editors: IRE “is developing a series of online training materials, from general reporting tips to specifics on data and technology,” according to the organization’s website. The offerings are billed as affordable and available in the coming year. www.ire.org

Knight Digital Media Center: “KDMC offers workshops to mid-career journalists to enhance their expertise and multimedia skills,” according to its website. The center is a partnership of the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and the USC Annenberg School for Communication. KDMC describes its tutorials as “a supplement to the in-person multimedia training seminars staged by the center’s staff. The robust online lessons and tutorials “are meant to serve to the journalists and the public.” <http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu>

National Newspaper Association: NNA does not provide training, but offers a collection of links to free digital media training across the web. www.nnaweb.org

NewsLab: NewsLab bills itself as “an online resource and training center for journalists in all media that has one simple goal: to help journalists create better work by building their skills and broadening their thinking.” The independent, nonprofit group’s executive director, Deborah Potter, “conducts journalism training for newsrooms and journalism organizations in the United States and around the world.” Training options include one- or two-hour sessions, plus half-day and multi-day workshops, and its website offers an array of tips and tools. www.newslab.org

Online News Association: The 11-year-old association is made up mostly of professional digital journalists, and they’ve developed their own training curriculum. Though ONA offers some digital media training at venues around the US, the 1,600-member organization has chosen to allow only members to access the training section of its site. <http://journalists.org>

Poynter Institute: The institute touts itself as one of the largest and best collections of digital media training opportunities “from individual coaching and in-person seminars, to online courses, Webinars and publications.” The institute is poised to launch “a new Media News microsite” that is “structured to leverage Poynter’s unique strengths and respond to consistent user feedback,” according to a post by Julie Moos, Poynter’s online director. “The new Media News site will make it easier to understand how journalism is changing, with the latest news and analysis from Romanesko, Al’s Morning Meeting, Mobile Media, our business writers, and easier to learn the skills you need to shape journalism’s future.” www.poynter.org/training

RTDNA: The “Radio Television Digital News Association is the world’s largest professional organization exclusively serving the electronic news profession,” according to its site. Its membership is composed of “more than 3,000 news directors, news associates, educators and students.” RTDNA currently offers digital media training in the form of webinars and sponsored seminars, but it does not offer a consolidated webpage with free digital media training tools. www.rtdna.org

DIGITAL MEDIA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jeff Achen



Jeff Achen is the interactive media strategist for Minnesota Community Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation and GiveMN.org. He is responsible for multimedia production, developing and executing social media strategy, editing print publications and helping to build new marketing partnerships. He also works as a freelance videographer and photographer. His freelance work can be seen at www.jeffachenvideography.com and www.mnvideopro.com. Previously, Jeff served as online editor and multimedia producer for Thisweek Newspapers/Thisweeklive.com. Jeff has reported for the *Times* newspaper in Thief River Falls and WDAZ-Channel 8 television in Grand Forks, N.D. He's also interned at the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice in San Diego, an extension of his graduate studies on the role of the news media in conflict. He is a four-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, for which he served from 1993 to 1997. And he served in the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer from 2002 to 2003. He has taught basic and advanced media writing, video editing and production, and public speaking courses at the University of North Dakota. He lives in Apple Valley, Minn., with his wife, Jennifer, and daughter, Kaitlyn.

Rebecca Aguilar



Before becoming a freelance multimedia reporter, Rebecca Aguilar spent 28 years as a television news reporter. Her career includes 14 years at the Fox affiliate in Dallas, Texas, and reporting jobs at KNBC-TV in Los Angeles, KPNX-TV in Phoenix, KENS-TV in San Antonio, KRIS-TV in Corpus Christi, WLS-TV in Chicago and WDHO-TV (now WNWO-TV) in Toledo. During her time as a broadcast reporter, Rebecca received 47 awards and nominations for her work, including the 2007 NAHJ Broadcast Journalist of the Year Award, the 2005 Texas AP Television Reporter of the Year Award and seven Emmy Awards.

In 2009, *USA Today* featured Rebecca for her social network Wise Latinas Linked, an online gathering place where Latinas across the country, and some in other countries, meet to network, discuss experiences, share job tips, advertise community events, tout career milestones and seek advice on life issues. And she was recently elected an at-large board member for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Three years ago, Rebecca turned her focus to multimedia studies. She is currently working on her certification in several multimedia platforms. She specializes in producing online stories, digital slideshows and video packages, and she's contributed work to pegasusnews.com. When Rebecca is not reporting, she is teaching broadcast reporters how to improve their work and use multimedia tools. She also teaches print reporters and photographers how to write and produce video packages and create voiceovers. She's conducted journalism workshops for the Lone Star Emmy Chapter, the Texas Association of Broadcasters and Investigative Reporters and Editors. She is a public speaker for Latino and women's organizations, for which she teaches non-journalists how to work with traditional and social media. Rebecca lives in Dallas, Texas, with her teenage son, Alex, and her husband, John Boos, who is a television director.

Daniel Axelrod, vice-chairman, report's lead author and coordinator



Daniel Axelrod spent five years as a full-time newspaper reporter, most recently with *The Times-Tribune* in Scranton, Pa., before moving into public relations with his April 2009 hiring at Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania. A native of Rocky Point, N.Y., Daniel holds a bachelor's degree in history and communications from SUNY Cortland and a journalism master's degree from Syracuse University. From 2004 to 2009, Daniel won 14 newspaper journalism awards from state press associations in New York, New England and Pennsylvania. His stories have examined the rising number of opiate addicts in Northeast Pennsylvania, investigated the consequences of development in the Poconos and spotlighted the effects of years of under-funding schools in Plymouth, Mass. Daniel is president of SPJ's Keystone Pro Chapter, which covers most of

Pennsylvania. Under his leadership, SPJ's national offices recently recognized Keystone Pro with the "Outstanding Professional Chapter Award," for being one of the top three small chapters in the nation in 2010. Daniel also runs Writers Unlimited Agency, a nonprofit organization that promotes the arts, education and creative writing. In his spare time, he enjoys freelancing for magazines and adjunct teaching writing and journalism courses at local colleges. In May 2010, Daniel served as a fellow in the Knight Digital Media Center's Multimedia Reporting and Convergence Workshop at UC Berkeley.

Jessica Durkin



Jessica Durkin is a Knight Media Policy Fellow with the New America Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based, nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute. She also serves as Region 3 director for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, for which she represents Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Washington, D.C. Jessica is the founder of InOtherNews.us, a directory of online, independent news start-ups across the United States. Her interests lie in media reform and examining local news alternatives to traditional media. She comes from a print journalism background, and her professional newspaper career began when Maine's largest newspaper, the *Portland Press-Herald*, awarded her a minority internship in summer 2004. From there, Jessica was hired by the *Norwich Bulletin*, a former Gannett paper in eastern Connecticut, where she initially covered the world's two largest Indian casinos, Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun, and the tribes that ran them. She later covered several municipalities in the paper's

territory, and she was on a team of reporters who chronicled the first execution of a Connecticut death row inmate in 45 years. In 2007, Jessica was hired by *The Times-Tribune* in Scranton, Pa., where she worked on a regional beat and served as a night police reporter until 2009. A native of Corpus Christi, Texas, Jessica holds a bachelor's degree in communications-journalism from Cal Poly Pomona in Southern California. She is a candidate for a master's degree in library and information science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Hilary Fosdal, committee chairwoman



Hilary Fosdal is associate new media editor at the Law Bulletin Publishing Co. Prior to joining LBPC, she worked as the interactive content manager for Barrington Broadcasting Group. She managed the day-to-day online news operations of the company's 21 television stations, which are based in 15 markets throughout the nation — from Columbia, S.C. to Marquette, Mich. She also worked for Quincy Newspapers Inc. as an assignment editor at WKOW in Madison, Wis., and as an Internet director and assignment editor at WXOW in La Crosse, Wis. She called Beijing, China, home for several years while she consulted for the *People's Daily & Market Daily* newspapers. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a master's degree in journalism and mass communications. She also currently serves as president-elect and vice president of membership for SPJ's Chicago Headline Club.

Amanda Maurer



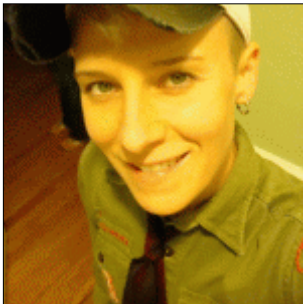
Amanda Maurer is creative director for an Internet marketing start-up in Chicago. In her last position, she briefly led the social media unit of 435 Digital, a Tribune-owned digital media consulting business that advises small and mid-sized businesses about social media and Internet advertising. Prior to that, Amanda worked for the *Chicago Tribune*, which she joined to work on a trial social media project in March 2008. A few months later, she was brought on full-time to coordinate all social network and news initiatives for the paper and to work as the newsroom's SEO liaison. In May 2009, she joined *chicagotribune.com* as an online staff producer, a role in which she divided her time between working on the paper's website and moving the *Tribune's* social media efforts forward. Amanda graduated from Columbia College Chicago in May 2008.

Jennifer Peebles, incoming committee chairwoman



Jennifer Peebles is a deputy editor at Texas Watchdog, a nonprofit online news site that is part of the Investigative News Network, covering local and state government in the Houston area. She previously served as the government editor of *The Tennessean* newspaper, where she led an investigation into the Tennessee Highway Patrol that unearthed deep-seated cronyism and a scheme in which troopers were promoted after making campaign contributions to connected politicians. She is the 2009 winner of the John Aubuchon Freedom on Information Award from Capitolbeat and the 2009 Open Doors Award from the Fort Worth Pro Chapter of SPJ. She is a board member of the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas, a former board member of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government and she is a past president of the Middle Tennessee Pro Chapter of SPJ.

Emily Sweeney



Emily Sweeney is a staff reporter at *The Boston Globe*. She was one of the first writers at *The Globe* to carry a camcorder on assignments and produce videos for the newspaper's website. Her work has been featured on New England Cable News, The Howard Stern Show and numerous other media outlets. Emily is a member of the *Boston Globe's* Speakers Bureau, and she frequently gives talks at schools, universities and industry events. She currently serves as president of the New England Pro Chapter of SPJ.