

The Convergence Newsletter

-- From Newsplex at the University of South Carolina
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EXPLORING THE MEANING OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an editorially neutral forum for discussion of the theoretical and professional meaning of media convergence.

We welcome articles on any topic directly related to media convergence. We also welcome information about conferences, publications and related links.

Please contact us for submission guidelines and a deadline schedule.

Tyler Jones, Editor
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***** FEATURE ARTICLES

Conveying Convergence While Diversifying the Newsroom: Looking Toward the Next Generation

George L. Daniels

While the debate continues over convergence in the newsroom or converging college and university journalism curricula, some are introducing the "c" word to a whole new generation of journalists. This summer I had the pleasure of working with one of the nation's

oldest Minority Journalism Workshops (MJW) here at The University of Alabama.

During this 20th year of the 10-day intensive crash course in journalism reporting and writing, high school students made the historic leap from just producing a tabloid newspaper to writing for a television newscast and preparing their newspaper stories for posting on the Internet with additional links to related news and information.

Such experiences are not uncommon. In the Spring 2003 issue of the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund's *Adviser Update*, the Oklahoma Interscholastic Press Association reported success in having students produce, along with the print product, a CD-ROM and story packages for the web with a similar workshop in the summer of 2002.

Here in Tuscaloosa, I believe the 17 high school students who took part in MJW, most of whom were African-American, had a bigger stake in becoming acquainted with multimedia journalism. The latest data from the American Society of Newspaper Editors show minority journalists still make up only 12.53 percent of newspaper journalists. Meanwhile, data released this summer by the Radio-Television News Directors Association showed the percentage of minority broadcast journalists dropped for the second year in a row.

These data speak to the importance of minority students especially making themselves as marketable and versatile to find a job in the journalism profession, whether on the print, online or broadcast side. Their marketability and versatility increase when they understand the importance of having a strong foundation in news reporting and writing skills coupled with a familiarity with how news content can be presented in multiple platforms. The pressure on the industry to hire these future journalists increases when these prospective workers can bring a broader multimedia background to the table.

Most of the MJW students spent the little free time they had during the workshop surfing the net and playing online games anyway. They've grown up in an Internet age even if the computer with high speed connections was not as readily available at home. My goal in the web session was to expose them to the possibility of being a contributor to the web, not just a consumer.

The bottom line is exposure. With students of color, who historically have had less access to computerized technology than their white counterparts, such exposure is essential as the media develop and expand and we continue to address the need for greater racial diversity in newsrooms.

Am I preaching to the choir? Most who might be reading this article are already on the convergence "bandwagon." The *Adviser Update* article included survey results from Oklahoma publications advisers who indicated they did not plan to include media convergence projects in their programs in the near future. The Oklahoma Interscholastic Press Association survey found most advisers did not see convergence activities as a way to attract students into their journalism programs.

In fact, the biggest barriers to convergence at the high school level may be unwilling teachers. Like some journalism departments reluctant

to change curricula and newsroom managers hesitant to work with multiple media platforms, high school teachers also need to understand how convergence can help their programs stay on the cutting edge. Their ought to come a day when the first-year journalism or mass communication majors will come in already knowing about multimedia presentation because of what they learned in high school. We'll have to wait to see just how soon this day will come.

Daniels is an Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Alabama

What Convergent Newsroom Managers Need and Want

Lynn Zoch

Journalism educators and professionals alike are united in their disarray - how do today's educators, trainers and coaches prepare tomorrow's young professionals for careers in the media newsrooms of the 21st century that may require multiple-media newsgathering skills and judgments?

The findings from the research focus on issues related to hiring and educating journalists for careers in multiple-media newsgathering. The study found true convergence will require commitment by management to full equality of all media partners, a seamless integration of newsgathering and dissemination, and an agreement on the education and training necessary for the journalists who will work in multiple-media news operations.

Findings

The researchers found that almost twice as many respondents employ audio and video on their web sites as produce it themselves suggesting that the most difficulty task is combining sound and moving pictures into a finished news story. Fewer than 40% of the managers in news organizations employing both audio and video on their web sites report that they are able to produce this material efficiently and with sufficient quality employing existing news personnel.

Decisions about who assigns stories to reporters using multiple-media newsgathering emanate from one of three areas: Just fewer than 40% said assignments are made by the news organization's web staff, a third said they're made by the newspapers' central news desk, and one-fifth said they are made by a multiple-media editor. The researchers found it interesting that approximately 60% of the respondents indicated decisions to assign a multiple-media story were being made by staff members who are primarily "tech-people" and not by the newspaper's central news desk.

Apparently true multiple-media decision-making is still not taking place, even in newsrooms where staff see themselves as engaging in convergent newsgathering. The process of producing audio/visual news content is seen by news managers even in newsrooms attempting to produce a multiple-media product as so separate from their regular print product that often it is not even discussed in the same meetings.

Newspapers may work with partners but the decision-making regarding news coverage apparently is still a unilateral one -- newspaper management keeping control of, and overseeing, its own staff. It seems clear that the newspapers moving toward convergence by working with a media partner wish to retain control of the journalistic decisions but as of yet do not have the multiple-media newsgathering personnel necessary to obviate the need for their media partner.

Almost half of the respondents also indicate they have separate print and audio/video staffs -- again indicating that the two areas are not truly converging in their news coverage.

Subjects were asked two questions about the education of their new hires. The first question was "What type of education do you *currently* look for when hiring reporters who may be asked to report for web or multiple media?" and the second asked "*ideally*, what type of education would you look for . . . etc.?" The findings show that a transition in thinking is taking place among those currently attempting to converge their newsgathering processes. While more than a third currently look for those trained in traditional print journalism, in the future only one-tenth will be hiring those trained in that tradition. New media journalism and a classic liberal arts education are the educational backgrounds employers will look for in the future.

Three-quarters of the respondents, all of whom are involved in some form of multiple media initiative, indicated their managers regard the newspaper's reporting staff as "primarily print reporters who adapt their work for multiple media" once again emphasizing that convergence may be an interesting concept but practically, it hasn't made its way into the hearts and minds of those that control the news process.

If, as the literature indicates, true convergence means combining newsgathering and news-reporting efforts into one entity from which multiple media are then used to transmit messages to a mass audience, the less "adapting" that takes place the better. Reporters, editors and managers must all learn to work as a team to identify, assign, collect and report information that can be used in a variety of media rather than trying to change traditional reporters who haven't been taught to think in this way.

Methods

Because of the need to obtain responses from news organizations world-wide, the researchers elected to employ a self-administered questionnaire with explanatory materials sent to all subjects by means of a combination of e-mail and an Internet web site. Subjects for the survey were obtained from a census of Ifra member organizations from the Ifra database. (Ifra is the world's largest association of media publishing). Ifra membership represents almost all of the world's leading news media organizations

The following article was taken from a larger paper presented at the AEJMC Conference in Kansas City, MO (July 30-August 2) and was presented in entirety as:

Preparing for a Career in the Unknown: What Convergent Newsroom Managers Need and Want.

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This Isn't Your Father's Summer School

Tyler Jones

When you first step foot in the Newsplex newsroom, thoughts of the command deck of the USS Enterprise flood your mind or perhaps the entertainment centers shown on MTV Cribs.

Sensory overload is the first impression when a collage of high-tech computers greet you at your desk and the futuristic eyes of several plasma-screen televisions peer down at you from above. But, as Newsplex trainees will attest, the technology at Newsplex quickly becomes secondary to the new journalistic processes that are an integral part of the training in convergent journalism that takes place at Newsplex.

This summer, from July 6th to July 17th, the University of South Carolina, in conjunction with Ifra and Newsplex, held two seminars for both faculty and college students in order to allow interested individuals the chance to experience the new journalistic roles, new technologies, and new opportunities afforded by the convergence of media organizations and forms.

Participants from all over the country (from Marquette to Florida A&M and Bennett College to Southwest Missouri State) gathered to receive training in the emerging field of convergence in the mass media industry.

The faculty seminar, which was more intently focused upon curriculum and research in the convergent media field, spanned from July 6-10. Newsplex staff and several faculty from the University of South Carolina presided over the discussions that ranged from Newsplex philosophy to new media regulations to Web design and digital photography. While much of the seminar featured training sessions and role playing that gave faculty new methods and material to teach, the attendees were also given ample opportunity to discuss and debate this new cross-media entity in the confines of the 5,700 square foot Newsplex.

Dr. Sybril Bennett, the Executive Director of the New Century Journalism Program at Belmont University, echoed the sentiments of the faculty attendees by stating, "I was exposed to the vision of the newsroom of the future, the latest technology, and to several faculty who are helping to develop journalism curriculum to train journalists for the Age of New Media."

Dr. Augie Grant, Newsplex Academic Liaison and organizer of the seminars, spoke of the relationship between technology and media; namely, how the seminar would combine education and experience. "Traditional patterns of sending output to print, broadcast, and online publication are being supplanted by new ways of organizing and reporting the news. We're exploring how these media can be integrated and the roles that will arise in the newsroom."

Grant also commented that, "Along the way, we will introduce new tools ranging from software applications to specific equipment."

While the faculty seminars were more oriented toward teaching and research, the student seminars gave young journalists their first taste of the newsroom of the future and how it will look and perform.

For Carrah Herring, a Junior from Bennett College in Greensboro, N.C., the experience opened her eyes to the direction of journalism. "I've seen a lot of new things and I feel comfortable getting to know the new technologies of the industry."

The student seminar was an important trial for not just the students, but for the USC faculty as well, especially since the School of Journalism and Mass Communication will introduce a 12-hour certificate program in Convergent Journalism in summer 2004.

Jones is a graduate student at the University of South Carolina and Editor of the Convergence Newsletter

***** NEWSPLEX NEWS

Newsplex Fall Conference, November 6-8, 2003

The rapidly evolving media landscape is producing new patterns of media use that are having profound implications for the competitive media landscape, the daily operation of media organizations, and our understanding of the theoretical forces that underlie media use. The purpose of this conference is to provide a scholarly forum for understanding these evolving patterns of media use from a variety of perspectives, from the theoretical to the practical.

Presentations will address many areas of media practice, including advertising, journalism, broadcasting, information studies, library sciences, and public relations.

This Conference is part of USC's annual conference series exploring media convergence. The conference will also include sessions targeted at or featuring media managers and other professionals involved in the day-to-day production of media content.

Conference registration materials will be available after August 15 on our website: <http://newsplex.sc.edu>

For a copy of the flier listing all upcoming Newsplex academic offerings, please e-mail Newsplex Academic Coordinator Augie Grant at augie@sc.edu.

***** CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Beyond the Printed Word: The World of Electronic Publishing Conference
October 30-31 Rome, Italy
For information: <http://www.ifra.com>

PNC Conference: "Cultural Heritage and Collaboration in the
Digital Age"
November 7, 2003
Thailand

Issues discussed include digital museums, multimedia representations of culture, multimedia visualization, and digital resources for teaching and research.

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4th International Summit on Newsrooms

IFRA PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE
"Expanding Convergence"
Ifra Newsplex at the University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina, U.S.A.
5-6 Nov. 2003

News organizations are beginning to take notice of the kind of news content and functionality that today's news consumers require, and are implementing strategies to deliver on consumer demands. By analyzing users' news consumption behavior and explicit responses, news companies have learned that their readers, viewers, listeners and surfers want more interactivity, more multimedia content, more choices in news and time-shifting, and more opportunities to multitask.

Summit4 will focus on how news companies are responding to what users want, and about strategies to shift from a media-focused organization to a user-focused company. Case studies and academic research will explain the opportunities and challenges associated with the shift in focus.

For additional information, visit:
http://www.newsplex.org/program/training_summit4.shtml

Online News Association Conference

Chicago and Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.
14-15 Nov. 2003

This conference will bring together hundreds of online journalists for two days of professional networking and focused discussion of issues critical to the digital news industry

A banquet and presentation of the 4th Annual Online Journalism Awards will culminate the ONA conference. The awards will be presented to reporters, editors, photographers, designers, producers and news outlets that have demonstrated excellence in online journalism in the past year. Attendees will have the opportunity to question award honorees during the annual "Best of the Best" program.

For additional information, visit:
<http://www.journalists.org/Programs/Conferences.htm>

Broadcast Education Association

49th Annual Convention & Exhibition
2nd Annual Festival of Media Arts
Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S.A.
16-18 April 2004

The BEA2004 Convention theme is Bold Vision, Fresh Thinking: Untangling Media's Gordian Knot. The theme lends itself well to examining new approaches to the vexing issues of media's intricate societal entanglements. Each panel should strive to seriously think about, challenge, and/or discuss the issues that arise from emerging technologies, changing regulatory policies and increasing media consolidation-and to do so in daring and innovative ways. The theme is intended as a focus for the convention, but does not imply that convention sessions must conform.

For additional information, visit:
<http://www.beaweb.org/bea2004/callprop.html>

The Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, & Letters

Grand Valley State University
Pew Campus
Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.
5-6 March 2004

The Academy is pleased next year to meet at Grand Valley State University, an institutional member of the organization since the Academy's incorporation in 1969. GVSU last hosted the Academy in 1999.

Dennis L. Wignall, Ph.D., Saginaw Valley State University, chairs the Communication section.

For additional information, visit:
<http://www.umich.edu/~michacad/>

***** ANNOUNCEMENTS

JOB OPENING (S)

Position: Media Convergence. Applicants should be able to lead the College's efforts in convergent Media, serve as a liaison between the School and Newsplex, the College's unique laboratory newsroom of the future, produce training and development programs for media professionals and develop teaching tools to support undergraduate and graduate instruction in the College. Applicants should be able to teach media convergence and new media technology and other courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels and contribute to the School's research and service mission. Experience in conduction media training workshops and seminars is a plus. Applicants are expected to participate in faculty governance and professional service activities and will advise students. For more information please contact Debbie Garris at 803-777-3244.

RELATED LINKS

For information about our Academic Affiliates, visit:
<http://www.newsplex.org/affiliates.shtml>

Newsplex at the University of South Carolina Web Site:
<http://newsplex.sc.edu/>

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