



THE ENGAGING NEWS PROJECT

Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin

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DIGITAL NEWS LEADERS SHARE CHALLENGES, IDEAS FOR IMPROVING ONLINE NEWS

The Engaging News Project recently hosted its second News Engagement Workshop, bringing together 11 digital news innovators to discuss current practices and future possibilities.

During the two-day workshop, participants brainstormed an array of new ideas about digital news. Some of their ideas include:

- Metrics-based goal setting: Have journalists set goals for their stories and then evaluate whether they met the goal
- Was this helpful?: Provide a rating scale allowing readers to give feedback about whether news stories are helpful
- Tailor article length: Create articles of different lengths to cater to different readers
- Citizen-focused reporting: Combat political polarization by giving citizens more voice in political stories

“Too often we let the politicians drive the news cycle,” said Wright Bryan of NPR. “Instead we should put politicians in the middle of the story, and instead put Jane X at the top of the story and explain how she’s being affected by the law, the federal program, the corporation – whatever it is.”

A major topic of conversation during the workshop was audience involvement. Some of the participants shared what has worked in their newsrooms in terms of engaging audiences, while others shared what they hope to achieve through audience involvement.

“We want our audience to come to us when they don’t have to,” said Rachel Clarke, senior editor for CNN Digital. “If we can build and engage an audience that knows who we are and how they fit in and how they can benefit from us – that would be a great thing to achieve.”

Other topics discussed at the workshop include:

- Digital Success and Analytics – How can analytics and engagement best be incorporated throughout the practice of making the news? What new metrics would you want?
- Website Design – What are best practices and new ideas for providing visitors with reasons to keep coming back?
- Political Polarization – What could newsrooms do to affect levels of polarization?
- Questions Facing the Digital Newsroom – What do you wish you knew about metrics, workflow, mobile, and keeping pace with technology?

“We learned so much from our first News Engagement Workshop, and we were excited to host another workshop with new participants,” said Dr. Natalie Stroud, director of the Engaging News Project. “All these digital innovators have such great ideas for how to improve online news, and this was an opportunity for them to share those ideas with us and each other. We look forward to doing research to test out several of their ideas.”

For more findings from the workshop, download the full report on our [website](#). Photos from the workshop can be viewed on the Engaging News Project’s [Facebook page](#).

Participants included:

Wright Bryan, NPR

Jennifer Carroll, Gannett Digital

Megan Chan, Politico

Rachel Clarke, CNN

Ryan Kellett, The Washington Post

Enrique Lavin, NJ Advance Media

Allison Lichter, The Wall Street Journal

Todd Olmstead, The Wall Street Journal

Barry Osborne, The Denver Post

Allison Rockey, Vox

Ben Turk Tolub, Philly.com

The Engaging News Project has a single aim: to provide research-based techniques for engaging online audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. We are housed at the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin. Learn more at engagingnewsproject.org.