



## News Engagement Workshop Report

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For its second News Engagement Workshop, the Engaging News Project brought together a group of digital news leaders including, from left: Jennifer Carroll, Gannett Digital; Barry Osborne, The Denver Post; Alex Quinn, e.thePeople; Wright Bryan, NPR; Dr. Natalie Stroud, Engaging News Project; Todd Olmstead, The Wall Street Journal; Allison Rockey, Vox; Enrique Lavin, NJ Advance Media; and Megan Chan, Politico.

### Introduction

In October, the Engaging News Project hosted its second News Engagement Workshop, bringing together 11 digital news thought leaders from CNN, The Denver Post, Gannett Digital, NJ Advance Media, NPR, Philly.com, Politico, Vox, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. During the two-day workshop, participants shared their ideas and experiences with digital innovation in their news organizations.

Participants brainstormed an incredible array of new ideas about digital news. We describe many ideas in this report, but to mention a few:

- 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

In this report, we describe the themes that emerged from the workshop, including:

- (1) 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?
- (2) Audience Involvement – How can readers and staff engage?
- (3) Website Design – What are best practices and new ideas for providing visitors with reasons to keep coming back?
- (4) Political Polarization – What could newsrooms do to affect levels of polarization?
- (5) Questions Facing the Digital Newsroom – What do you wish you knew about metrics, workflow, mobile, and keeping pace with technology?

## Digital Success & Analytics



From left: Jonathan Kartt, Rita Allen Foundation; Jennifer Carroll, Gannett Digital; Ryan Kellett, The Washington Post; Barry Osborne, The Denver Post.

Workshop participants discussed the metrics that they use and how to maximize success based on the metrics. Participants shared a variety of ideas that clustered around three themes: (1) Journalistic Uses of Analytics, (2) Newsrooms' Digital Successes and Analytics Practices, and (3) Social Media as Digital Success. Participants also shared creative ideas about what metrics they wished existed; some of their thoughts are listed below under "blue sky metrics."

### 1. Journalistic Uses of Analytics

**Giving journalists access to their analytics and using metrics-based goal setting were discussed.**

I think it's such a powerful thing for journalists to [see their numbers], but we have people who say they don't want to only think about the page views. We go, okay, so show me. What is success for you? Because we can find out if your story was actually successful. Write the story that gets everybody through the story to the end. Write a story that gets shared on Facebook. Don't poo-poo the popular stuff. Great, go do something that's deeper, more engaged on that subject. But then show that you actually met a goal, that it was successful with the audience. You can't just write about biking to work because you're passionate about it. Take it a step further. (Clarke)

The greatness of Chartbeat is that you can have real-time numbers. The terrible part of Chartbeat is it's easy to get too focused on it .... You've got to spend some serious time getting into Omniture. It has to be easy for reporters to jump on board and that's why Chartbeat is such a presence among news organizations these days. (Kellett)

Chartbeat is just showing you what's happening right now; it is not the whole story. (Bryan)

**Emphasis was placed on the effective use of technology, whether to facilitate journalism or to resurface older content.**

What we're looking for in our metrics [for older content] is to see what's bubbling up for whatever reason and then to republish it out through social. People find stuff and usually there's a reason for it. When you see a story that's a year old or two years old that's suddenly getting 50,000 page views out of nowhere, you ask why is that? And often it's because an anniversary is coming up or news has happened again that's related to it, and we'll grab that and put it in our Facebook feed and put it out on Twitter, and often we'll get a lot of traffic to it again. (Bryan)

We ask is this story a really solid piece of journalism, and does the technology that we built get in the way or does it help it? (Chan)

## **2. Newsrooms' Digital Successes and Analytics Practices**

**Incorporating analytics and engagement throughout the news reporting process emerged as an important indicator of digital success.**

One of the things that we've been trying to practice is thinking about engagement as part of the reporting process.... We bring in our community engagement editors to be part of that conversation. (Lavin)

We have a newly formed audience development desk and one of the things that has happened for the last six months or so is we have an audience development manager who sends out a note at about 9:30 every morning with what's topping Google News.... It's specific, it's daily, it's clear, it gets editors right where they are, and it keeps them focused on the Internet. (Lichter)

I find that just by having our producers A/B test headlines, we're increasing all of our metrics. (Turk Tolub)

When we get an editor using a new digital tool or Twitter or Facebook for their reporting, that's a kind of digital success for us. (Lichter)

One thing that we're looking for is not just are the reporters engaged in social media, but are they talking about each other? Are the people in our organizations supporting each other on social? Is our stuff good enough that they want to? (Bryan)

**Participants also mentioned keeping a clear brand identity while utilizing metrics.**

I think the real key for us is focusing [on your key audience] and staying in your lane. The Internet is such a big place that you could chase everything if you wanted to. (Chan)

It's about protecting the brand, but also about how can we stretch? How can we grow? (Clarke)

## **3. Social Media as Digital Success**

**Social media presents many opportunities, but care must be taken to manage the brand and to think about the business side of the news.**

Social's growth is exciting. More people have access to information and ways to engage with it. With these platforms being major traffic drivers, the trick is making sure that the discussion is happening on our Politico.com platform. There is tremendous value in the volume of distribution on Facebook or Twitter, but we need to make sure that conversation is not only around our journalism but on our platforms to benefit our business. (Chan)

The social media team sits in a pretty awkward position between wanting to create content that's more shareable and maybe appeals to a bigger, broader audience that may not be in line with what sells subscriptions.... We're sort of balancing the brand that we're known for with reaching audiences that don't know us as well, and it's challenging. (Lichter)

People don't have time to click on everything in their feed, so if you click on a Politico thing, I want you to know that it's worth the time. (Chan)

We've found that referrals on social usually are one page and done. (Carroll)

Our digital team has been trying to educate our staff that Twitter is not where their core audience is. It's on our website. Unless you have more than 1,000 followers, and they are clicking on links to your stories, then the vast majority of your readers are on the website where you're getting more than 1,000 page views per story. (Lavin)

### **Social headlines also have to match the brand.**

If you're the writer, if you're the person who's authoring the content, you need to write the best thing to sell your story the first time because everything else is based on that. So the big push this past year in our newsroom is get your headline – get a shareable social headline – there first and the rest of the team will take care of optimizing that in different ways. (Kellett)

This is tongue-in-cheek, but in Colorado, we had a story about the suburban girls who were trying to go to Syria, and when we launched a major update, I wanted to change the headline to, "You Won't Believe What These Suburban Denver Girls Did Over The Weekend." And we were not going to do that. But just once, I just want to do it to see what would happen; but that's not our brand. (Osborne)

We are – for our writers in particular – tracking both social and SEO, so we know how many of their readers are coming from search. (Rockey)

## **4. Blue Sky Metrics**

### **Participants brainstormed a host of new metrics that would be useful.**

We've talked a lot about time spent, but something that I think would be really valuable is some sort of **time saved metric**. Time saved would be: Did you deliver the information that someone wanted in the most efficient way possible? I think a hallmark of a really engaged audience is one that knows they can come to you to get what they need in an efficient way that's respectful of their time.... I don't want to trick them into spending a long time on our site if every time they leave, they didn't get what they needed or didn't get what they came there for. I would rather that they always come back and not stay very long, but feel extra informed when they leave. (Olmstead)

I'm interested in **defining the audience you want to reach and then having the metrics to figure out if you actually reached that community**. And if you didn't reach that community, what other communities did you reach? (Kellett)

My blue sky idea would be **assigning a cost value to every piece of content** that we produce that says: this is how much it cost in terms of a fraction of salary for the guy who wrote it, his gas money, and so on, and then comparing that against the ads we had on the page, what the click-throughs were, what the impressions were for that page, and the whole cycle. (Chan)

In baseball, there's this thing called OBPS. It's your on-base percentage, plus your slugging percentage, so it's how much you get on base and your power. I would like to be able to have an **OBPS for reporters** so that when they ask, "Why isn't my story on the homepage?" I can say "your story is doing great, but it's doing terrible on the homepage. It doesn't mean you're not a valuable player." (Osborne)

I wonder if you could do a thing like the support websites for any online service, where at the end of it they ask, **was this helpful?** Because all the support sites are automated, they try to use that information to figure out which posts are actually useful to the people who came there to find something out. I wonder if we could do that in news. (Bryan)

## Audience Involvement



From left: Megan Chan, Politico; Ben Turk Tolub, Philly.com; Allison Lichter, The Wall Street Journal; and Rachel Clarke, CNN.

Participants answered several questions related to audience engagement, including:

- What does engagement mean for you/your organization?
- How, if at all, does social media help your organization?
- What are some of the problems associated with comment sections?
- What are new ways to try to engage news audiences?

### **1. For Readers: Move Readers Up the Ladder of Engagement**

We look at it in terms of a ladder of engagement – what’s the lowest barrier, easiest thing we can get people to do, and then moving people up to higher steps. (Rockey)

I think that you need to start low and frequently in engagement – it’s a continuous loop – so that when something significant happens, they’re ready for you. (Carroll)

On the social media end, we look at engagement in terms of retweets, replies, and shares, and it’s important to us, but we have a sense that it’s important to us to have a relationship with readers just because we want them to feel connected to us. We’re asking more followers on social networks to tell us what they think about things and that translates into spreading our word outside of our walls more, and that’s, in itself, valuable. (Lichter)

We want our audience to come to us when they don’t have to. 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. (Clarke)

I’m looking at ways of rewarding the best commenters, perhaps the way Twitter verifies a profile with a check mark. If we could find a way to give “trusted users” a badge to help moderate, we

believe we'll be able to improve the conversation. This goes hand in hand with having our reporting staff in the comments more often. (Lavin)

## **2. For the Staff: Engaged Audiences Lead to Engaged Reporting**

The ladder of engagement exists within our staff as well. Give reporters and editors tools they want to use, that they feel comfortable using. You get great story ideas. You get great engagement. (Lichter)

We've had some success with Q&As on Facebook. And the reporters and editors who have done it have a light bulb go off where they say, "Whoa, the questions are good. People care about this and they want to talk to me about it." (Olmstead)

We were doing Q&A's on our site with the reporter and she had three story ideas come out of the questions that came from the readers in an hour-and-a-half period. The newsroom gets very energized by these Q&As and the response from the audience. It's really, really exciting. (Rockey)

We've had limited success with live chats. Sports gets better traction than any other area. What's key to us is making sure readers know we're available for them and that we can provide access to the newsmakers they care about. So we've been doing more live video chats through Google Hangout with lawmakers or reporter to reporter, asking readers to send questions in advance so we can get those answered. (Lavin)

We get reporters into a Reddit chat and the questions are very good and fun and interesting, and they often do it over an hour and a half or they'll come back to it later that night and rejoin the conversation. (Bryan)

A takeaway is that engagement is not just about what your readers or viewers are doing, it's also about what your internal people are doing. It goes both ways. (Olmstead)

## **3. Elevate the Conversation by Being a Part of It**

In conjunction with our primary mission of getting our reporting staff in front of the audience is improving the conversation on the site. We've taken a concerted effort to make the content of the comments reflect the journalism that we present and make it more inviting for people to participate in the public discourse. (Lavin)

We do a lot of Meetups, a lot of finding out where the community is, whatever that community might be, and encouraging the newsroom, especially the reporting staff, to spend much more of their time there so that they can help be catalysts for discussion and really be on top of the pulse. It's about elevating the conversation so that when you're there, you're really getting to the heart of what's happening. (Carroll)

I think in all this digital world and personalization and whatnot, people don't meet face-to-face, and people really do like it: Here's a real person talking to me telling me the story. And yeah, you can watch it on video, but I think when you see that in the room, it's very powerful. (Osborne)

If someone's going to show up for an event, they basically decided that they're about who you are. (Kellett)



#### **4. Directly Involve the Audience**

##### *Engage leaders & experts from the community*

There are a lot of experts in the community. So if you're trying to solve something that is really complex, chances are that there are people in the community that are experts on that the topic, and they're very glad to start weighing in. (Carroll)

Make sure that the leaders in that field are mentioned in a Tweet, or that you're directing a Tweet to them specifically. We try to get the big voices in any particular area to speak not for us, but to speak about us. (Clarke)

In trying to engage community leaders, we started a project called Voices of Philly and gave many of them their own blogs on the site. They brought their community along with them, they get lots of comments, and they've become very popular on the site. (Turk Tolub)

##### *Tagging, moderating, and categorizing*

We would really like to have people tag our current content and our archival content not only in the standard taxonomy kind of ways, but also tag it into more lifestyle buckets—how it relates to their lives. Give people the chance to respond to the content in a different way, as well as to sort it out for us and explain it to us. (Bryan)

When people are tagging their content and filing it away or they're starring things and saving them for later; I think all those actions are so important. (Chan)

I hope we could find a way for readers to help moderate – help them to be part of the conversation where the conversation's taking place on the topics that they care about. (Lavin)

My dream is for us have a really smart way of categorizing and tagging our users so that we can engage with people and know that when someone says, "I'm a doctor who is an expert on this," that we know internally that's actually who that person is. (Olmstead)

We've practiced a little bit with identifying and inviting people who want to participate in public discourse on the site, and hitting them up specifically – inviting people who write op-eds to go into the comments to support or defend their op-ed, or people who are knowledgeable on their side of the topic to go in the comments. (Lavin)

##### *Crowdsourcing & audience-guided content*

We're always chasing an audience. We're trying to get on the trend as it's going up. What if we had a reliable set of people who are telling us what they want? Someone who not only engages with you, but is invested in you? That would be a very powerful person to have on your site. (Clarke)

With the Curious City project, the public suggests what should be covered and the station involves the person who suggested it in the coverage. So it's a very personal kind of a thing. (Bryan)

The Bold Italic really tries to identify the pulse of what matters and then invite the community to help them with the reporting. What they've learned is that when you say, "Be a journalist," people say, "Oh, wait. I don't have the qualifications for that." But if you say, "Share what you know. Share what you're thinking. Share what you're doing." then they respond a lot differently. (Carroll)

There's a project in New Orleans called Listening Post and they've reached into communities where people are not online and asked them a question once a week. They pick through the answers and then put people on-air to try to give a voice to the community that's not there. (Bryan)

## Website Design

Participants broke into groups to brainstorm how to get people to stay on a site after they've clicked on an article. They talked about what worked, in their experience, and what they'd be interested in trying.

### 1. Personalization

**Personalizing and tailoring the content to meet users' needs was seen as one way to increase interaction on a site.**

Several tailoring strategies that could be done automatically by a news organization were mentioned. Specifically, the news product could be tailored based on:

- Where people come from (e.g. Twitter vs. Facebook)
- How far down the page a reader has gotten
- Whether the person is a first-time site visitor or one who has been to the site before
- Device-specific personalization
- Time of day

Other personalization options could be enacted by the visitor and facilitated by a news organization, including personalization based on:

- One's mood
- How much time one has (e.g., WNYC)
- Having audiences tag the content for themselves and create their own communities around different tags

The group also emphasized that there needs to be some randomness in any recommendation system so that readers can be surprised and can learn about topics that they didn't even know were of interest.

### 2. Time and Convenience

**Recognizing that people are busy, workshop participants brainstormed several ways to help readers manage their time on a site.**

The length of the article came up several times. Several participants wondered about whether **article length could be tailored** by type of reader.

Insights could be gained by better **understanding when people typically leave a page** on average.

Questions arose about how to signal the length of an article to a reader. A few ideas emerged such as **using subheads** to make longer content seem more manageable. Others nominated ways of helping readers manage their time, such as **allowing users to pick up where they left off**, giving them a **"save for later" option**, or emailing them about stories they wanted to read later.

### 3. Page Design

**Page design can affect whether people remain on a site or leave.**

Although a few workshop participants commented that **the homepage** is dead, several came from organizations working to do more with their homepages.

Questions arose about how many **entry points** are needed on a homepage, particularly how many are required above the fold. At the same time, some mentioned the need to reduce **clutter**.

Features available on the site also matter; several commented that **quizzes, galleries, and polls** attract users. Thinking about how to expand this in the future, participants wondered about including videos and links as part of galleries to give people the ability to dig deeper into a story.

The **right rail** came up during conversation. Although there was agreement that this is a difficult part of a web page, several found content that did well in the space, such as “top stories,” links to popular sections, and unique visual content.

**Videos and visuals** play an important role in design. Featuring video on the page when most people watch, such as on weekends, was one strategy mentioned.

**Navigation bars** raised questions – how many people use them? How can they be designed effectively?

### 4. Banners, Inline Linking, Pop-ups

**Serving people with additional content at the right moment can increase time on site.**

**Inline linking** and **suggested links** worked well for several organizations represented at the workshop. Some wondered about how many suggested links would be appropriate; it is possible that two or three carefully curated links may be better than more links. Links that provide context, such as the “5 Things You Missed” about a recent news topic, could be particularly valuable.

Participants also mentioned **infinite scroll** as a strategy worth exploring.

It was clear that participants had some hesitation about using **banners or pop-ups**. They worried that people get numb to pop-ups and that a banner following you could be annoying. Yet having something that physically moves into the field of view with a suggested article seemed appealing to some as a way encourage people to stay on the site.

**Mobile** came up as a consideration; several avoid features such as flyouts and pop-ups that don’t translate to mobile.

## Political Polarization



From left: Wright Bryan, NPR; Dr. Natalie Stroud, Engaging News Project; Todd Olmstead, The Wall Street Journal; Allison Rockey, Vox.

Participants were given five minutes to brainstorm, then share their ideas on what they could do to improve political polarization via their websites.

### 1. Change the Focus

**One of the clearest themes across participants was shifting the focus of news reporting from politicians to citizens and policies affecting citizens.**

What if we gave readers the opportunity to read a political story, with the option to not see information that is likely to influence their view of the facts? We could allow them to hide information such as what political party someone belongs to or even what politician we are referring to in some situations. That way readers could have the experience of understanding an issue and the political ramifications, but without knowing party affiliation. (Rockey)

Too often we let the politicians drive the news cycle. 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. (Bryan)

Instead of giving the politician the lead photo, let's give a person, the face of this particular issue, the lead photo. (Lichter)

What if the politics page had a different presentational tone? What if the back page was off-white? What if there was an image of something like Mount Rushmore in the banner? (Osborne)

If our focus can stay on policy and on issues that everyone has claim to, and we discussed those issues without pegging it to one ideology or another, that can keep bringing in people from different points of view to a common ground. (Lichter)

I think Politico is at its best when we're answering questions that everybody, both inside the Beltway and outside, want to know. (Chan)

What if we looked at polarization like a sports metaphor? People feel free to talk about sports – the teams they follow, the teams they hate. But they don't do the same when they're talking about politics, especially on social media. (Carroll)

I think we should ask ourselves "What do people need to know?" And then report on policies and people in a way that gets to how things are affecting them. (Bryan)

## 2. Engagement

### **Participants suggested ways of improving engagement on their websites.**

What if we gave readers a prompt that said, “Do you want to see an opposing point of view?” Now if they really want to see the opposing view or not is an interesting question. But asking some of those questions and creating a frame is important. (Kellett)

If we could tweak things in the comment section, like elevating a “top comment,” then maybe we could show thoughtful discourse by a member of the community. (Osborne)

Can we as journalists find a way to speak honestly about what we do and then lead the conversation in the comments? (Lavin)

I’m curious to see what would happen if we had fact checker who would see what was written in the comment section, and then write a separate article that explained what happened in the comments and showed both sides of the discussion. (Turk Tolub)

Could we invite more people to write up columns who are conservative or liberal-leaning? (Lavin)

Maybe you have a really hot topic story and then you have a kitten photo gallery in the right rail. It’s not related, but maybe readers want a little dessert with their vegetables. If you put those two things side by side, perhaps that could help increase engagement with that story. (Osborne)

## 3. Social media

### **Social media came up as a way to connect with readers and help them better understand what they’re seeing online.**

What if we could build something that allows people to give us entry into their personal social media world, and we could show them, based on what they post and what their friends’ post, where they rate on the polarization scale? (Olmstead)

I wonder if there is a way we can serve up the smartest disagreements to the content we are providing. Is it as simple as saying “Follow these five people on Twitter who have very opposing views to this topic?” (Rockey)

People could submit the latest political memes that showed up in their Facebook feed, and we could show them how accurate that meme is. (Olmstead)

## 4. News vs. Opinion

### **Discussion arose about distinguishing between news articles and opinion pieces.**

What we’ve seen is that readers don’t always know, or care, what about difference between news and opinion. So I’m wondering if we want to embark down a road that teaches readers over time what is opinion and what is fact. (Kellett)

We have been thinking of doing a reader’s guide that clearly states what an opinion piece is and what is a news article. (Lavin)

We face the challenge where people can’t tell the difference, or don’t react differently, between a news article and an opinion piece. If they’re against something that’s mentioned in a news article, they’re going to come out pretty fiercely in the comments section. (Turk Tolub)

## Questions Facing Digital Newsrooms



Enrique Lavin, NJ Advance Media, shares an idea with the other workshop participants.

Participants thought aloud about what they wanted to know and the challenges and opportunities facing digital newsrooms.

### 1. Metrics

**Participants wanted to know more about site visitor behavior and the impact of journalism. They also craved comparative metrics.**

#### *Internal metrics*

We actually don't know a lot about where traffic come from, but we frequently cite these traffic numbers and base decisions on them. (Kellett)

Commenter behavior is something I would be interested in learning more about. What is the catalyst for someone taking that step from being a regular user to a commenter? (Olmstead)

The question I would like answered is how do we fit into people's lives? I think that no one's satisfied with any of the user experiences that are available. And people's reading and viewing and listening habits are changing all the time, so how do we fit into that? (Bryan)

We don't really know how to measure the impact of journalism, and that's something that would be of interest to us. We can certainly measure lots of things about the content we produce, but the impact is not one of them. (Olmstead)

#### *Comparative metrics*

We can look at our numbers internally and not know what they mean industry-wide. So it'd be great to look at The Denver Post and say, "Oh, our numbers are here. Your numbers are there. How are your numbers good and mine bad?" (Osborne)

A lot of times when national stories don't do well on our page, I'll see what similarly sized papers are doing just so I know I'm in the ballpark. To get that type of insight from other news organizations would be fascinating. (Turk Tolub)

I'd love to have more transparent comparative metrics across the industry to better understand where we stand with other organizations, because I think we should all learn from each other. I don't know why we have anything to hide. (Bryan)

## **2. Workflow**

### **Figuring out how to integrate digital needs and maximize employee skillsets arose as important concerns.**

In terms of workflow and in terms of changing newsrooms, one challenge I think about a lot is cultivating talent and integrating skill sets. I like the idea of having an organized way to make sure we're using everyone's talents, and that everybody's playing at the top of their game. We have this massive 1,800-person newsroom, and how to make sure we're getting everybody to use their talents in the best possible way is a big challenge. (Lichter)

I want to create a baseball card for the writers that broke down their stats, including all their different engagement stats and output stats. I think that most newsroom employees are competitive by nature and when they see their "numbers," they will be inclined to try to top their previous bests. (Osborne)

We're at our best when our reporters are out there in the field. So how do I get from them what I need to share on the web? (Clarke)

Are we getting the most out of our people and are they happy with how they're performing, or is there a way to mix things up so that when they're at their best, even if it's not 100%, it's better? (Osborne)

## **3. Mobile/Apps**

### **Many wanted to know more about catering to a growing mobile audience.**

We continue to ramp up our mobile efforts, and certainly customizing for different platforms is one of our top goals. (Chan)

I want to know how differently do mobile and desktop users engage and behave on the site. What are the behaviors that are different between the two groups, and how different do they need to be? (Rockey)

Mobile web is skyrocketing, especially during the day. (Chan)

We're making a big push to make mobile first. (Lichter)

With posting breaking news on Twitter, mobile is king because people see a Tweet and click on the link to the story. For breaking news, if they want more, they go to our mobile site. (Clarke)

Our mobile site is responsible for about 45% of our traffic right now, and our app traffic is maybe 1 to 2%. But app users consume about 10 times as much content as the people on the mobile site. (Turk Tolub)



Overall digital readership is dominated by the website. But our individual app users read more per person. They view close to 20 stories per month, while Web users view about two stories per month. (Bryan)

Sixty percent of our traffic comes from mobile, but we haven't found a way to serve the mobile audience beyond what we already have in terms of the advent of doing mobile responsive web design. (Lavin)

We're growing, but we still have a small staff and several teams share responsibility for mobile. (Chan)

#### **4. Technology**

**Keeping pace with technological change and using it to maximize journalism was a theme resonating throughout the workshop.**

How can we use emerging technologies to help people better understand what's actually happening during important stories and therefore change the level of civil and civic engagement? For instance, when Ferguson, Missouri broke, nobody really understood what was going on. What if, by using new technologies, you could virtually put me there so I could see what it would be like to be there, so I could look in front of and behind me and feel that tension? Or you could discuss global warming by showing the flooding that is likely to happen. (Carroll)

We teach our staff as much as we can to be fluent digital reporters, and then another round of tools come around. The digital team is tasked with testing these things, so we're testing and reporters adopt other tools and it all becomes a little problematic – when is all the experimentation going to end? (Lavin)

It would be great if we had a place where we could go to, like the journalism toolbox on emerging technologies, and be able to feel like we can keep up and keep our staff trained. (Lavin)

## Digital Innovation from Each Organization

Workshop participants shared a digital innovation from their organization.

**Barry Osborne** shared how The Denver Post is using Trendsmap, which shows, on a map, how popular a topic is on Twitter. The map works by showing dots that expand and contract over time to indicate the frequency with which terms are used on Twitter. Osborne described that when the Denver Broncos released their punter earlier this year, The Denver Post used Trendsmap to display how popular the story was nationally and locally. The newspaper is now looking at ways to embed Trendsmap into their daily content.

A unique project **Ben Turk Tolub** described was Philly.com's Project Liberty, which selects three to five startups to move into the Philly.com building every six months. The startups are invited to use the newsroom's resources. For Philly.com, Project Liberty is a way to meet innovative entrepreneurs in the Philadelphia area, and to learn from their new ideas.

In the summer of 2014, Gannett Digital and the Des Moines Register experimented with the Oculus Rift, a 360 degree headset that gives the user the feeling of being transported to a different location.

**Jennifer Carroll** said that for its experiment, the Register incorporated the virtual experience with its "Harvest of Change" series, which looked at how demographic and economic changes are affecting Iowa farm families.

**Enrique Lavin** shared NJ.com's "Together New Jersey," a project aimed at reaching out to the community in Northern New Jersey and engaging with residents to touch on topics like climate change, housing, quality of life, and transportation. The newspaper published 30 posts related to residents' responses, with some leading to individual articles.

For the NPR newsroom, **Wright Bryan** and his team developed an analytics dashboard that shares the organization's traffic data, including the day's top 50 stories and top online referrers. Using that data, editors and reporters can gain a better idea of how to best connect with readers and listeners.

For the 2014 general election, Politico's **Megan Chan** faced a dilemma – how do you present live results in a way that makes sense for someone who doesn't follow politics, while also serving your core audience who is very knowledgeable? For Politico, it was about providing clean data while also allowing users to find background information on each race, including primary results. The site also made it easy to share election results on Twitter by generating automatic tweets based on the results.

To give its audience more control over how they watch CNN, the network created CNNgo, a digital viewing experience that combines CNN's live broadcast with extra features. **Rachel Clarke** explained that with CNNgo, viewers can watch CNN live, as well as pause, rewind, or fast forward through content from the past 24 hours. CNNgo also features exclusive content. CNNgo can be used online or downloaded to the iPad.

The Wall Street Journal, **Todd Olmstead** and **Allison Lichter** shared, has been experimenting with digital-only projects. The newsroom created an interactive infographic about the European Central Bank's stress tests which yielded an average time on page of 10 minutes. The duo also shared some of the Journal's successes on Facebook, including targeting a specific audience. For example, when the newspaper wrote a post asking their audience in Egypt about the country's elections, it received about 7,000 shares. The organization also has a vibrant Facebook-based book club for interested readers.

Being a young organization, Vox is in a unique position to experiment with content and newsroom structure, said **Allison Rockey**. One thing that got the website a lot of attention was their 4-step quiz, “Do You Have Ebola?” The quiz was a simple, fun way to share important information about the Ebola crisis, and it ended up getting 58,000 shares on Facebook.

The digital innovation **Ryan Kellett** described started with a question – for a big story that will get thousands of comments, how can we make those comments useful? For a story on the Supreme Court’s ruling on gay marriage, The Washington Post asked readers the question, “Why does this matter to you?” gave people five options from which to choose, and allowed them to choose multiple options and leave a comment. The paper then organized the comments into a Venn diagram that showed the most popular viewpoints and where viewpoints overlapped.

## Workshop Participants

### **Wright Bryan**

Social Media Desk, NPR

Wright Bryan is co-lead of NPR's Social Media Desk. With nearly 20 years in digital newsrooms, including the last nine at NPR, Bryan's experience as a writer, producer and award-winning editor underpins his innovative work on journalism's social frontier. On a daily basis he helps connect NPR's journalists with the audience, peers and sources in communities such as Facebook, Twitter and reddit.

### **Jennifer Carroll**

Vice President, Digital Outreach, *Gannett Digital*

Jennifer Carroll spearheads advocacy for digital media platforms including desktop, iPhone, Android and tablet across Gannett's vast content network of newspapers and Broadcast stations. She has had several roles with Gannett Digital and also served as VP/New Media Content in Gannett's Newspaper Division. She helped conceive and launch Gannett's Information Center model, which transformed the way newsrooms gather and disseminate news and information to engage communities digitally. She had top editing roles including managing editor of the Lansing State Journal and The Detroit News, and was executive editor of The Burlington (VT) Free Press. She began her career as a reporter for the Times Herald in Port Huron. Carroll was named Gannett's Corporate Staffer of the Year, and was a co-winner of the Chairman's Special Achievement Award. She received her bachelor's degree and did master's work at Michigan State University.

### **Megan Chan**

Director of Digital Products, *Politico*

Megan H. Chan is director of digital products at POLITICO, where she focuses on digital development for the Web and mobile. Previously, she was the online Washington editor at USA TODAY. She has also worked for The Wall Street Journal Europe in Brussels, Newsday and the Star-Tribune. Megan graduated from the University of Southern California with a B.A. in print journalism and a minor in East Asian Studies. She also holds M.S. and M.A. degrees from the Columbia University School of Journalism, with a specialty in arts and culture.

## **Rachel Clarke**

Senior Editor, CNN Digital, *CNN*

Rachel Clarke is a Senior Editor for CNN Digital, part of the team that charts the course for breaking news and features across digital platforms and apps. She works with staffers from all over CNN as well as dedicated digital writers and multimedia producers to make sure CNN shares breaking news and compelling stories with its massive worldwide digital audience. Right now, she's working with the Lifestyle, Entertainment, Travel and Health digital teams on new ways to tell and share stories, harnessing technology and writing to create the most compelling content. As well as working on daily news coverage, Clarke is a lead editorial voice on special features such as bringing the World Cup to a U.S. audience and technical projects. These have included bringing in a new production system for all our digital journalists and working to introduce new templates to display stories with text, video, interactives and more. The weird accent comes from growing up in England, working for three years in Wales, then eight in Hong Kong and now nine in Atlanta.

## **Ryan Kellett**

Audience and Engagement Editor, *The Washington Post*

Ryan Kellett is the Audience and Engagement Editor at The Washington Post. His team is responsible for social media, search, and on-site engagement platforms. He also oversees for the General Assignment News Desk. Ryan joined The Post in 2010 and led the newsroom's Election 2012 online coverage as the National Digital Editor. Born and raised in San Francisco proper, Ryan is happy to commiserate with anyone exiled from the Bay Area. He is a graduate of Middlebury College in idyllic Vermont. If you'd like to hear about the Valentine's Day blizzard of 2007, just ask. Prior to joining The Post, Ryan spent time covering the Beijing Olympics and studying in Hangzhou, China. He was also NPR's first-ever social media intern during the wild west days of social media. If you're interested and/or bored to tears, Ryan would like to discuss a cappella, local food systems, and Android phones with you.

## **Enrique Lavin**

Community Engagement Lead, *NJ Advance Media*

Enrique Lavin is the Community Engagement Specialist lead at the newly formed NJ Advance Media, which provides content to NJ.com and *The Star-Ledger*. As the newsroom's engagement lead, Enrique helps shape and execute audience growth strategies on the website, working with a team of engagement specialists in sports, entertainment and local news. Enrique oversees engagement opportunities for politics, opinion, state and enterprise reporters. Before being tapped as the newspaper's first engagement director in 2012, Enrique was the Assistant Managing Editor for

Features, where he managed staff coverage of A&E and features. Ask him about the Munchmobile (a van with a hot dog on its roof!) and the book he edited: "Jersey Eats: The Ultimate Guide to Roadside Food." Nearly a decade earlier, Enrique was the founding editor of *Nuestra Comunidad*, Gannett's first Spanish-language weekly newspaper in New Jersey. Previously, Enrique was a music writer for various publications, getting stories from the cross-cultural mosh pits of the Latin rock music scene. He got his start as a reporter at the *Los Angeles Times*, covering community news and later Latin pop culture. He lives in Cranford, N.J., where he's happily married raising two kids.

## **Allison Lichter**

Social Media Editor, *The Wall Street Journal*

Allison Lichter currently heads up the Wall Street Journal's social media team, which works with WSJ editors and reporters around the world, conducting trainings on the use of social media for newsgathering, promoting content, building communities and engaging with readers. She has been a leader in the integration of the digital and print operations of the Journal: as a digital editor on the Journal's features coverage, she helped launch new online lifestyle sections and has been an editor on the Journal's careers and management coverage areas. Prior to joining the Journal, she was the culture editor at New York Public Radio/WNYC.org, NPR's largest affiliate, where she led a team of reporters, critics and producers in arts news coverage, created new paths for audience involvement, and launched a new web site devoted to the cultural life of New York. She was a founding producer of WNYC's Soundcheck, a music and arts talk show.

## **Todd Olmstead**

Community Editor, *The Wall Street Journal*

Todd Olmstead is Community Editor at the Wall Street Journal. In his role he oversees comments across [wsj.com](http://wsj.com), manages social media, and works on a variety of reader engagement initiatives. Before coming to the Journal, he was a community manager at Mashable, where he helped establish the social media strategy. He holds a master's degree in digital journalism from NYU, where he studied innovation in news, and a bachelor's from Colby College. He also writes about music and technology and can often be found watching NBA basketball from November to June.

## **Barry Osborne**

Online News Director, *The Denver Post*

Barry's first day as a [denverpost.com](http://denverpost.com) staffer coincided with the infamous "Balloon Boy" hoax that grabbed national attention. It was the perfect introduction to a job that places him at the center of the newsroom where content and digital delivery meet. Focused mainly on breaking news and maintenance of the home page, Barry is part of the newsroom staff that helped the Denver Post win

the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for coverage of the July 2012 Aurora theater shootings. Denverpost.com's current focus is to deliver the strongest Colorado breaking, politics, sports and features news across multiple digital platforms including social and mobile apps. The newsroom is also currently focused on delivering staff-created video content across all of these platforms. Barry started at The Denver Post in September, 2005 as a member of the research library staff.

## **Allison Rockey**

Engagement Editor, *Vox.com*

Allison Rockey is the engagement editor at Vox.com. She works with the journalists to create content that is successful on social. That ranges from sharing social media best practices across the staff to one-on-one refinement of stories and beats. She also oversees the Vox social channels and community engagement on the site. Prior to Vox, Allison was the director of social media at Blue State Digital. In her nearly 5 years at BSD Allison created digital fundraising and engagement campaigns for nonprofits, brands, and advocacy organizations ranging from the American Red Cross to Ford Motor Company and the Green Bay Packers.

## **Ben Turk Tolub**

Director of Product, *Philly.com*

Ben Turk Tolub has been building and managing websites for 20 years. He spent his early Internet years working at Sotheby's, the 270-year-old auction house, where he pitched and managed the launch of their first website in 1994. In 1999, he oversaw the user experience of the company's online auction website. Later, he co-founded [iGavel.com](http://iGavel.com)—one of the first “online only” auction sites—where he served as vice president. He was featured in Business Week's “Taking Off” series. Currently employed by the Philadelphia Media Network, Ben is the director of product for [Philly.com](http://Philly.com). Since 2010, he's survived four different ownership groups—and four different digital strategies. During his tenure, [Philly.com](http://Philly.com) has grown in local audience while his product team has more than doubled revenue between 2013 and 2014. Ben lives with his wife and three children in Wynnewood, PA.

## Workshop Guests & Staff

### **Jonathan Kartt**

Officer for Programs and Evaluation, Rita Allen Foundation

Jonathan Kartt is the officer for programs and evaluation at the Rita Allen Foundation, which supports work in the fields of US civic literacy and engagement and biomedical research. Previously, at the Bridgespan Group he advised large and small foundations and nonprofits in the international development, US democracy, human rights, and other fields. Prior to Bridgespan, Jonathan worked at Fundación AVINA in San Jose, Costa Rica, in private sector development at the World Bank/International Finance Corporation, and as a for-profit strategy consultant focusing on life sciences and energy. Jonathan also serves on the Board of Directors of the Magnum Photography Foundation. He studied at Dartmouth College and at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Bologna, Italy and Washington, D.C.

### **Alex Quinn**

Executive Director, e.thePeople

Alex joined e.thePeople in July 2013. Alex has more than 25 years of experience in educational and community-based media development. Prior to joining e.thePeople, Alex directed several media projects at Education Development Center aimed at improving literacy, numeracy, and basic science understanding among under educated adults. Quinn was the executive director at Games for Change—an organization dedicated to promoting the development of digital games addressing social issues—and also served as executive director for community media centers in Oregon and New York.

### **Melissa Huebsch**

Business Services, The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life

Melissa Huebsch is the full-time accountant and purchaser for the Annette Strauss Institute, and manages research grants. She has also provided administrative support, event planning and coordination expertise, as well as photography and design skills to the Institute since 2003. Melissa studied History and Vocal Performance at the University of Texas, but follows politics passionately.



## **Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud**

Associate Professor, Communication Studies  
*Director, Engaging News Project*  
University of Texas at Austin

Dr. Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud is the Director of the Engaging News Project at the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life and an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice* (Oxford, 2011), which received the 2012 Outstanding Book Award from the International Communication Association. Her research on people's preferences for likeminded political information led her to develop the Engaging News Project. The project is dedicated to encouraging open-minded engagement with politics through the news media. Stroud previously worked at the Annenberg Public Policy Center; the name of this project is a HT to Kathleen Hall Jamieson's "E4" work with local television news outlets during the 2002 midterm elections.

## **Katie Steiner**

Communication Associate, Engaging News Project

Katie Steiner is the Communication Associate for the Engaging News Project. She assists with all communications and outreach for the project. She previously worked as a reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune, The Bakersfield Californian and the Daily Nebraskan. She has also worked in corporate communications and public relations. Katie earned her bachelor's degree in News/Editorial and English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and is pursuing a master's degree in Journalism – Public Relations from Kent State University.

## **Alex Curry**

Doctoral Student, Communication Studies  
*Research Associate, Engaging News Project*  
University of Texas at Austin

Alex Curry is a doctoral student in communication studies and an Assistant Instructor at the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include political communication, news on mobile devices, and civic engagement, and he is particularly interested in how politicians use their own personal involvement with sports as a way to connect with voters. Prior to coming to Texas, Alex attended Brigham Young University, and from 2005 to 2010, he served as a writer for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. When he's not studying, Alex enjoys hiking with his wife and four children.

## **Cynthia Peacock**

Doctoral Student, Communication Studies  
Research Associate, Engaging News Project  
University of Texas at Austin

Cynthia Peacock (MA, University of Alabama at Birmingham) is a doctoral student in the department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is interested in political communication, media, and civic engagement. Cynthia is currently researching the ways in which people express—and avoid expressing—their political opinions.