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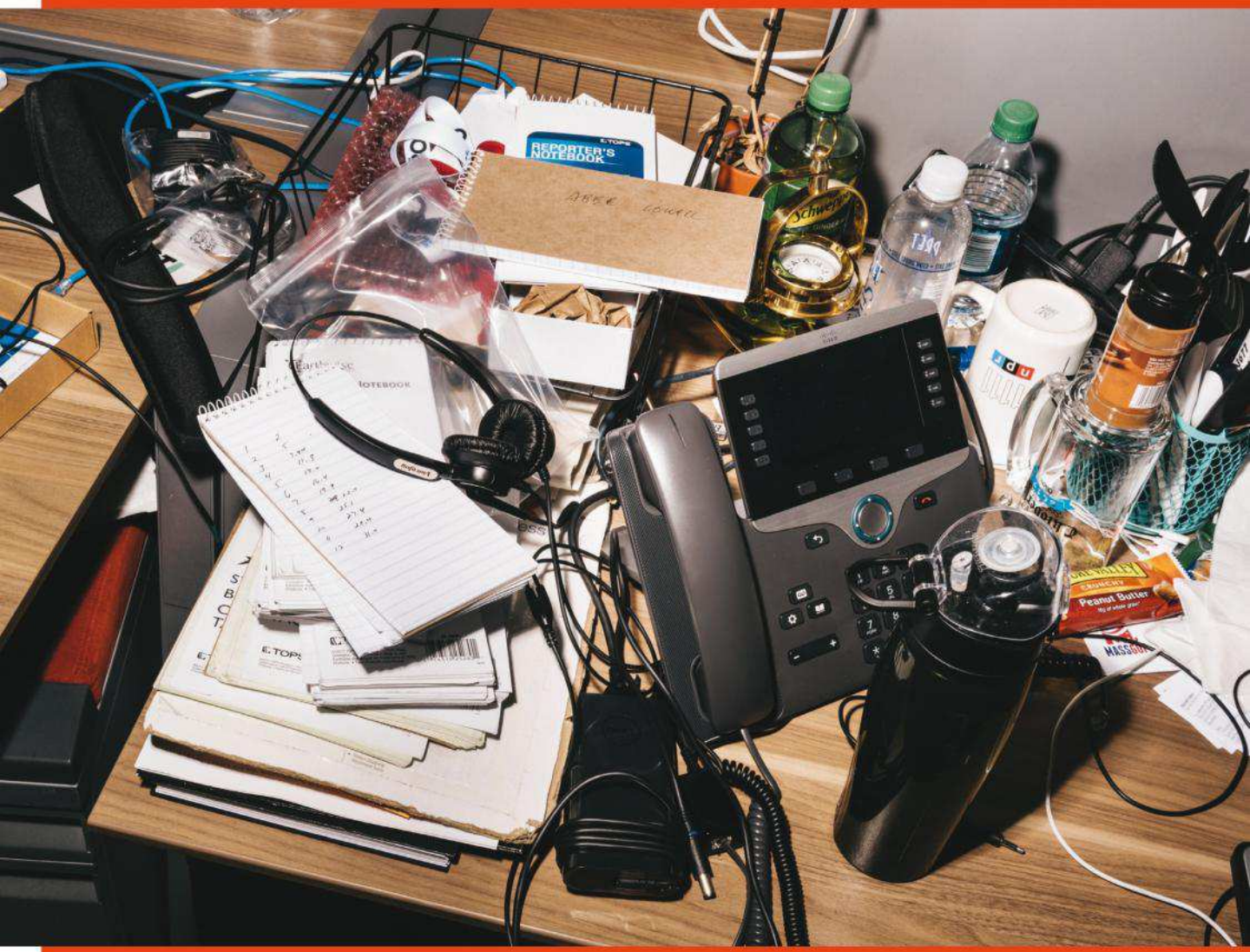

The Jobs Issue

Working

What it takes to be a journalist today

Atossa Araxia Abrahamian • Ana Marie Cox • Tish Durkin • Steven Greenhouse • Bill Grueskin
Anna Heyward • Sarah Jones • Michael A. Lindenberger • Monica Potts • Felix Salmon • Nikil Saval


Dad's Facebook Posts

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Vol. LVII, No. 2

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The University is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to equality, ethics, inclusivity, diversity and transparency

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This spread: HuffPost NYC,
Mic, *USA Today*

Photographs by
William Mebane

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Atossa Araxia Abrahamian is a senior editor at *The Nation* and the author of *The Cosmopolites*, an investigation into the global market for passports. Her reporting and criticism has appeared in *The New York Times*, BuzzFeed, *The Nation*, the *London Review of Books*, and many other publications. She has worked as an opinion editor for Al Jazeera America and a business journalist for Reuters.

Ana Marie Cox is a political columnist and culture critic whose writing has appeared in *The New Republic*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The Washington Post*, and *Esquire*. She hosts *With Friends Like These*, a podcast from Crooked Media. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Meg Dalton is a Delacorte Fellow at the *Columbia Journalism Review* and producer of its podcast, *The Kicker*. Off the clock, she dabbles in audio production for places like WHYY, NPR, and *Marketplace*. She is a former associate editor of MediaShift and a reporter in southwestern Connecticut.

Tish Durkin has been a political writer for the *New York Observer* and an opinion columnist for *National Journal*. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; and *Rolling Stone*. Now based in Princeton, New Jersey, she blogs at knickertwist.com.

Steven Greenhouse was a *New York Times* reporter for 31 years, covering labor and workplaces from 1995 to 2014. He is the author of *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker* and is writing a book on the past, present, and future of labor unions and worker power in America.

Bill Grueskin is on the faculty of Columbia Journalism School. He has previously worked as founding editor of a newspaper on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation, city editor of *The Miami Herald*, deputy managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, and an executive editor at Bloomberg News. He is a graduate of Stanford University (Classics) and Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies (US Foreign Policy and International Economics).

Anna Heyward has been published by *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, and *Bookforum*. She was a 2017 Fellow of the CUNY School of Journalism's Ravitch Fiscal Reporting Program and works on *The New Yorker*'s editorial staff.

Sarah Jones is a staff writer for *The New Republic*. She earned degrees from Cedarville University and Goldsmiths, University of London, and grew up in rural Washington County, Virginia.

Michael A. Lindenberger is an editorial writer and member of the editorial board at *The Dallas Morning News*, where he was previously the Washington correspondent for business. Lindenberger is a longtime contributor to magazines, including *Time* and *The New Republic,* and was a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University. He is a graduate of the University of Louisville School of Law.

William Mebane is a photographer who works on fine-art, commercial, and editorial projects. A regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Bloomberg Businessweek*, he lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two boys.

Alexandria Neason is CJR's senior staff writer and Senior Delacorte Fellow. Previously, she was a reporter at *The Village Voice* and covered education for the Teacher Project, a partnership between Columbia Journalism School and Slate. A team she worked on won the 2016 Education Writers Association award for news features.

Monica Potts is a journalist whose work has previously appeared in *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *Washington Monthly*, and is currently working on a book about women in rural Arkansas. Previously, she was a senior writer for *The American Prospect*, covering poverty and economic opportunity.

Felix Salmon is a financial writer, editor, and podcaster. A former finance blogger for Reuters and Condé Nast *Portfolio*, his work can be found at publications including Slate and *Wired*, as well as his own Substack newsletter.

Nikil Saval is co-editor of *n+1* and the author of *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace*.

Matthew Weber is an associate professor at Rutgers University in the School of Communication and Information, and he has published extensively on the role of technology in newsrooms. **Allie Kosterich** is an assistant professor at Pace University in the Department of Media, Communications, and Visual Arts; her research focuses on media industry transformation. Weber and Kosterich are both fellows at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism.

Congratulations to columnist **John Archibald,** winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary

"For lyrical and courageous commentary that is rooted in Alabama but has a national resonance in scrutinizing corrupt politicians, championing the rights of women and calling out hypocrisy."

Pulitzer Prize Board, 2017-2018

John Archibald is a columnist for AL.com and The Birmingham News.

AL.com The Birmingham News

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE

2018 Pulitzer Prize Winners

JOURNALISM

Public Service: *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*

Breaking News Reporting: Staff of *The Press Democrat*, Santa Rosa, Calif.

Investigative Reporting: Staff of *The Washington Post*

Explanatory Reporting: Staffs of *The Arizona Republic* and USA Today Network

Local Reporting: Staff of *The Cincinnati Enquirer*

National Reporting: Staffs of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*

International Reporting: Clare Baldwin, Andrew R.C. Marshall, and Manuel Mogato of Reuters

Feature Writing: Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Freelance Reporter, *GQ*

Commentary: John Archibald of Alabama Media Group, Birmingham, Ala.

Criticism: Jerry Saltz of *New York Magazine*

Editorial Writing: Andie Dominick of *The Des Moines Register*

Editorial Cartooning: Jake Halpern, Freelance Writer, and Michael Sloan, Freelance Cartoonist, *The New York Times*

Breaking News Photography: Ryan Kelly of *The Daily Progress*, Charlottesville, Va.

Feature Photography: Photography Staff of Reuters

LETTERS, DRAMA AND MUSIC

Fiction: *Less* by Andrew Sean Greer (Lee Boudreaux Books/ Little, Brown And Company)

Drama: *Cost of Living* by Martyna Majok

History: *The Gulf: The Making of An American Sea* by Jack E. Davis (Liveright/W.W. Norton)

Biography: *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder* by Caroline Fraser (Metropolitan Books)

Poetry: *Half-Light: Collected Poems 1965-2016* by Frank Bidart (Farrar, Straus And Giroux)

General Nonfiction: *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* by James Forman Jr. (Farrar, Straus And Giroux)

Music: *Damn.* by Kendrick Lamar, Recording Released on April 14, 2017.

The Pulitzer Prizes

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JOURNALISM MATTERS.

Congratulations to our Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists.

2018 Pulitzer Prize winners

Local Reporting

The Staff of The Cincinnati Enquirer

7 DAYS OF HEROIN

60 journalists provided a powerful examination of the opioid and heroin epidemic sweeping across Cincinnati, and the devastating effects it has on communities, families, facilities, and a system struggling to find solutions.

Explanatory Reporting

The Staff of The Arizona Republic and USA TODAY NETWORK

THE WALL

This multi-dimensional project cut through political rhetoric to examine the unintended consequences of a wall dividing the U.S. border and Mexico. Videos, articles, podcasting, and virtual reality set the stage for people to share how families, agriculture, economies, religion, nature, and more will be impacted beyond just a physical divide.

Editorial Writing

Andie Dominick of The Des Moines Register

Andie's editorials unapologetically put a human face on complex healthcare issues, including the consequences of privatization of the state's administration of Medicaid.

Finalists

Editorial Cartooning

Mike Thompson of Detroit Free Press

National Reporting

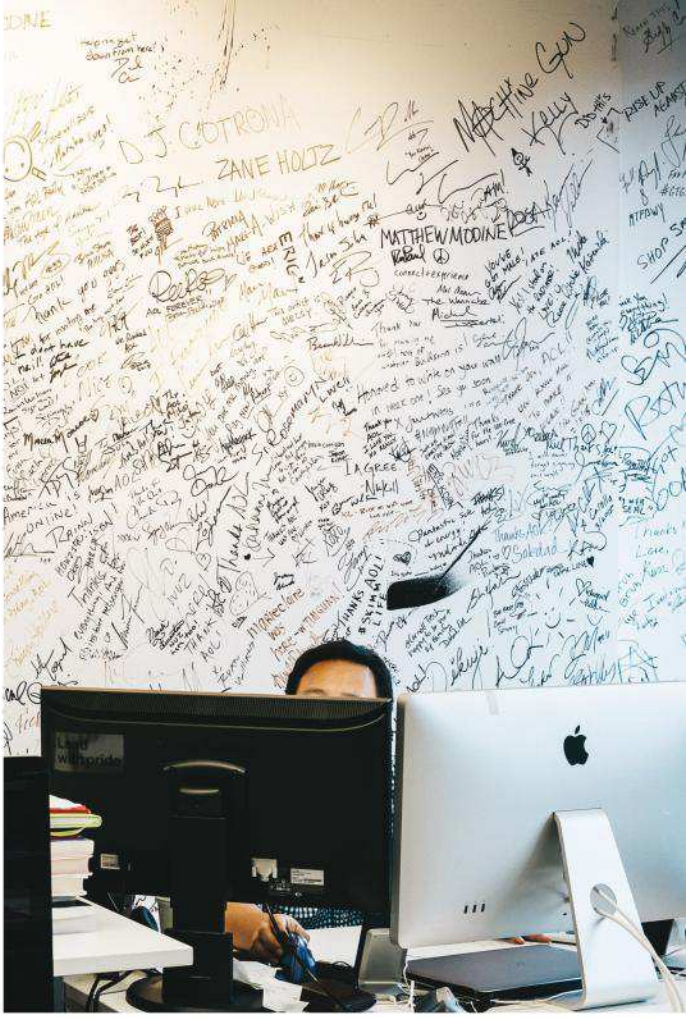
Brett Murphy of USA TODAY NETWORK

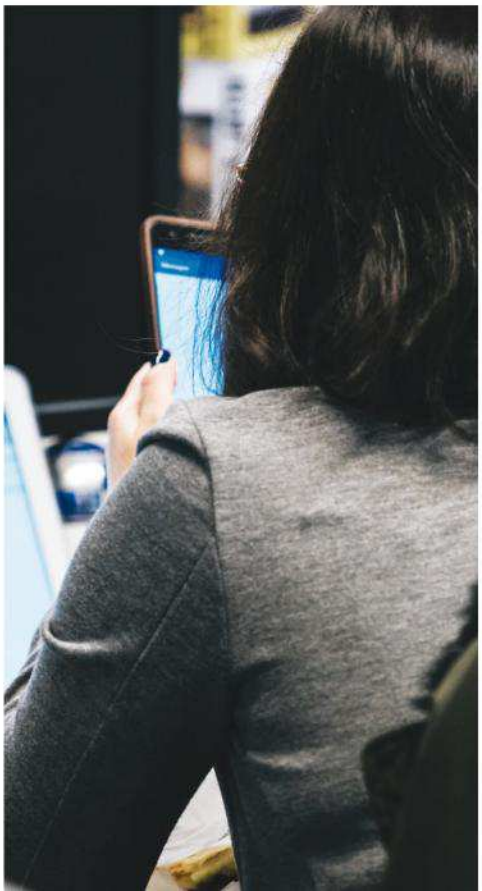
GANNETT | USA TODAY NETWORK

ABOUT THE PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE

You can't talk about journalism without talking about newsrooms, so we sent noted photographer William Mebane to see the rooms where it happens.

All the photography in this issue, unless otherwise noted, comes from the time he spent at *Washington City Paper*, Mic, *USA Today*, the New York *Daily News*, and the New York and Washington, DC, bureaus of HuffPost. This is the first time CJR has turned over an entire issue to a single photographer. We're thrilled with the results, which capture the messiness and the magic of working in journalism today. To hear more from Mebane, see his essay on page 66.





EDITOR'S NOTE

So You Wanna Be a Journalist?

The jobs picture is worse—and better—than you realize

AUTHOR
Kyle Pope

PHOTOGRAPHER
William Mebane

As far back as I can remember, I have known exactly what I wanted my job to be. I worked at my grade school newspaper (shout-out to *The Bobcat Chat*), then my high school paper, then my college one. My first car carried a SUPPORT PRESS FREEDOM bumper sticker, and my most-prized Christmas present as a kid was a knee-length tan trench coat, to match the ones I saw the foreign correspondents wearing on TV. (Never mind that I grew up in the desert of West Texas, where a trench coat was the single most impractical piece of clothing you could own.)

My parents, then political conservatives who watched Richard Nixon resign from office when I was 10, would justify my interests to their friends as such: "This is our son, Kyle. He wants to be a journalist. (Beat.) But he's not like all of those other journalists out there."

In fact, I wanted to be *exactly* like all of those other journalists out there and would spend the rest of my working life making it so, carving out a career that took me through local newspapers to national dailies to glossy magazines to, now, the editorship of the publication you're reading. (In between, in the 1990s, I worked as a foreign correspondent in London, where my trench coat dreams came true.)

Today, I find myself thinking a lot about the 10-year-old kid, or the high school newspaper editor, or the college graduate looking for a way into working journalism. Or, increasingly, to the veteran editor with one wary eye on the next round of layoffs. How can they find a way to do that thing they've always wanted to do? Is there even a career path in journalism anymore? Who can afford to be a reporter, anyway?

Let's first dispatch with the bad news, which you already know: The jobs picture in journalism is terrible. Since 2005, newspaper employment in the country has fallen by more than 50 percent. And while print jobs have taken the biggest hit, the employment picture has darkened in radio, TV, and, recently, digital media as well. News companies continue to cut their most senior (and best-paid) people, and lower levels of hiring have made what had been a tight market for new arrivals even more brutal. If you do manage to land a job? The pay is dismal, with the starting median salary for a reporter stagnating at $34,150.

All of which leads us to ask: Who in their right mind would want to go into this business in the first place? That, essentially, is the question we have set out to answer in this issue of CJR.

Being a working journalist is, of course, a job. Someone pays us to write or talk or edit other people's words. But it is also, as long as I've been doing it, an *identity*, as much a part of who I am as being a father or a husband or a New Yorker. (Sorry, kids.) And it is that sense of identity that is being tested and strained—and, at times, buttressed—by the moment in which we live.

It's impossible to be a journalist today without the sense that our work carries extra weight. When the president calls us enemies and liars, and his supporters across the country and around the world echo his talking points, it's hard to escape the sense that doing our job has a new element of risk. Even if we're simply reporting on high school football scores or the opening hours of the local library, the act of doing what we do has a renewed tinge of the oppositional,

Being a working journalist is, of course, a job. Someone pays us to write or talk or edit other people's words. But it is also, as long as I've been doing it, an *identity*. And it is that sense of identity that is being tested and strained—and, at times, buttressed—by the moment in which we live.

maybe even the transgressive. How could it not, when the very fact of our profession is being held up in some quarters as a sign of dishonesty and disloyalty?

Like many other journalists I know, I'm attracted to the outsiderness of what we do, so this moment has me more invested in my journalistic identity than I've ever been. And I can wear that identity with confidence because of the amazing work and reporting I see all around me, in markets big and small, by journalists young and old. I'm also energized by the subscribers and scholars and even celebrities who see this moment as a rallying cry for a much bigger (and apparently much-needed) conversation about the critical role of a free and vibrant press in a democracy, even if you don't happen to agree with what's being published. Given how few Americans seem to care on any given day about threats to press freedom in this country, the First Amendment is a much more fragile thing than any of us had previously realized.

For students of journalism history, from *The Front Page* to the *Daily Bugle*, the dismal journalism jobs picture is familiar. For decades in America, reporters were working-class troublemakers, the kind of people who would walk into a room (or, more often, a bar) and prompt everyone else in the place to groan.

Then, beginning in the late 1980s, journalism became professionalized. Reporters snagged book deals. They started appearing on TV. Their salaries climbed. That sense of being an outsider faded away. In fact, it was insider cred that a lot of these people most craved.

Before long, journalism became cool. And people who in previous lives may have been lawyers or bankers or doctors, people who wanted to have a career with a splash of glitz, became journalists instead. That old sense of identity, of mission and of purpose, was gone. The dilettantes blended in with the true believers.

Now we've come full circle. Terrible pay for reporters, a shortage of jobs, even a social stigma in some circles have filtered the business to the point that most of the journalists I meet—and especially the young people trying to get into the field—are here because they desperately want to be here, and can't imagine themselves anywhere else. They are exactly where I was, four decades ago.

The hiring choices we make now will shape the journalism that follows.

How, then, do we get them from here to there, from principled dreams to a paying job?

As we chronicle in this issue, there's a lot wrong with the state of the journalism job market. It still favors white, privileged, highly educated people at precisely the moment it needs to be more inclusive, given the changing demographics of the country. It's classist, populated with members of the same social strata, at a time when it should be more open to people from different economic backgrounds. It discounts age and experience when mentoring and life skills are critical. (And I'll leave it to our writers in this issue to debate the merits, and demerits, of journalism education, which, depending on your worldview, is either insidious or indispensable, but is without a doubt enormously expensive.)

You'll read about how the push for productivity has vastly expanded journalists' skill sets, but at a potential cost in the quality of what we do, and about how the financial demands of working in journalism today often require people to take second or third jobs to subsidize the work they love. At what point does your passion become its own kind of punishment?

And yet people continue to pour into the business, many returning to journalism from careers elsewhere, because they believe in what we do. Digital tools are spawning new journalistic entrepreneurs, and innovations in data visualization and AI and podcasting are giving rise to rich new forms of storytelling, finally matching the ambitions of new reporters with the tools they need to tell their stories.

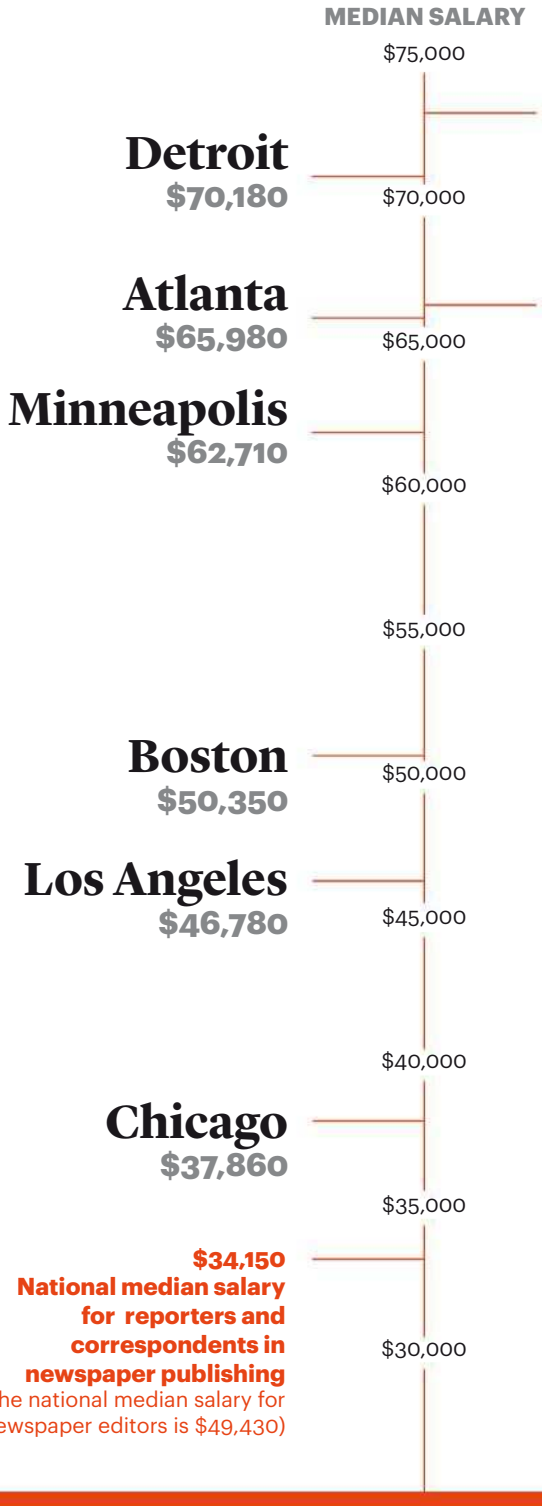
The challenges of the job market, and the questions they raise for all of us, are not inside baseball; they get to the heart of what journalism is and should be. We shouldn't treat those obstacles as fringe concerns, to be untangled while we try to keep the lights on and the presses rolling. With fewer job openings, every hire becomes that much more important, both in terms of creating the workforce that best serves our calling, and in recognizing the loss that comes with every dismissed worker. The hiring choices we make now will shape the journalism that follows: Do we focus on filling as many of the existing slots we have, or do we instead reimagine our newsrooms and the beats they contain? Should we continue to cover incremental, breaking news, or should we instead steer our resources toward more ambitious accountability reporting? At a time of severe budget constraints, can we afford to continue pouring money into soft-feature sections and service journalism that has, in many cases, become a commodity?

We are in a moment of our industry's professional life that we can't afford to squander. We are surrounded by eager, committed, energized colleagues, the majority of whom hear a calling that had either been quieted or silenced. It's ringing loudly now, in newsrooms around the world. CJR

Decent Work if You Can Get It

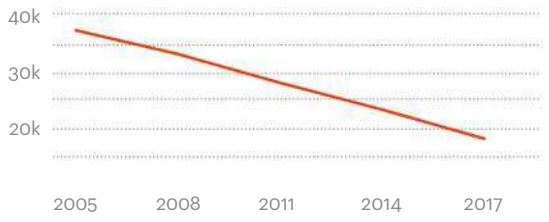
Employment in newspaper publishing has plummeted in recent years—almost half of reporter and correspondent jobs have disappeared since 2005. For those who remain, the financial picture isn't exactly rosy: Below, a sampling of major metropolitan areas shows a wide range of median salaries.

RESEARCH
Kelsey Ables
Denise Southwood

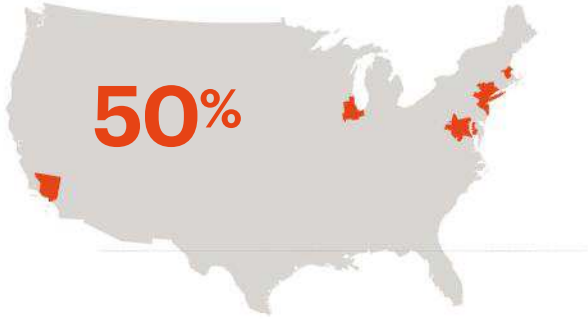


A Shrinking Market

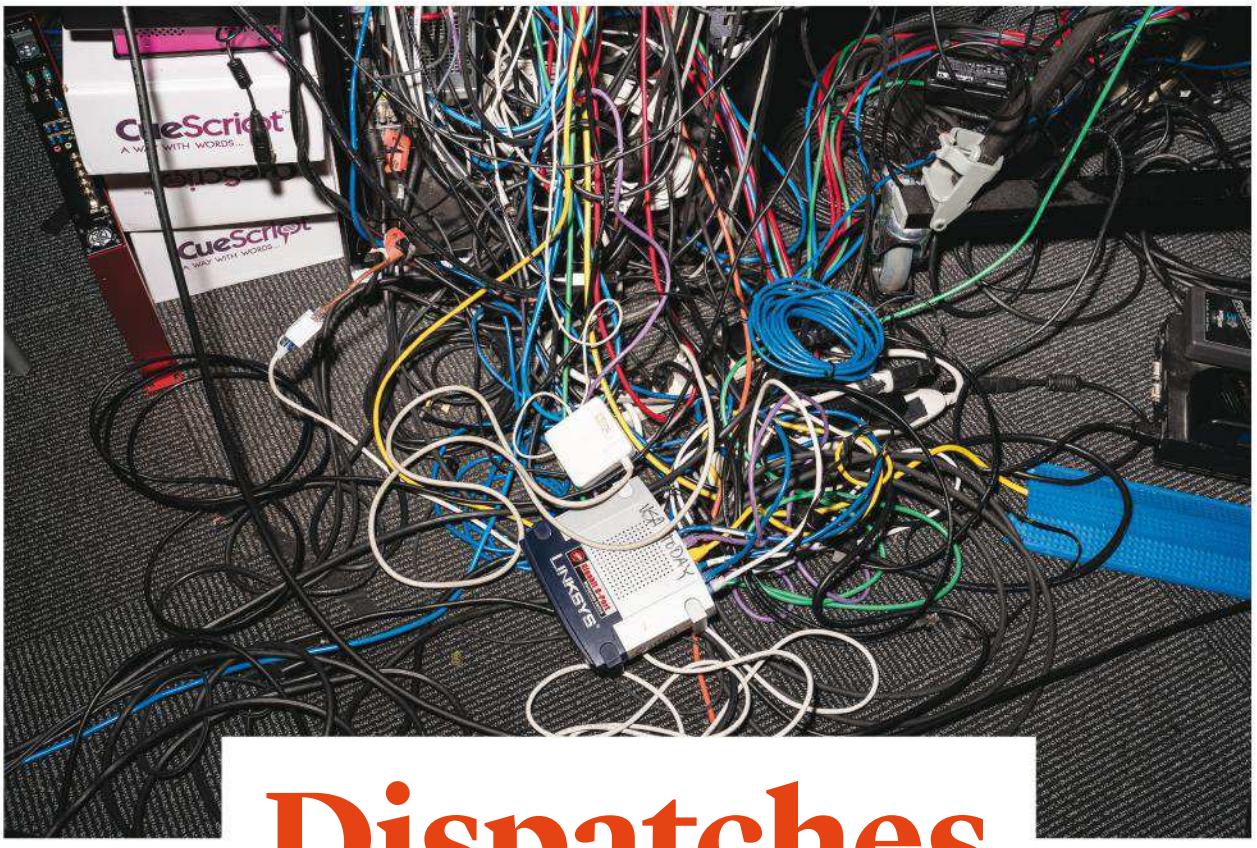
Reporter and correspondent jobs in newspaper publishing have plummeted from 37,480 in 2005 to 18,840 in 2017—**a decrease of almost 50%.**



These five metro areas—Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC—contain **half of all** reporter and correspondent jobs in America.

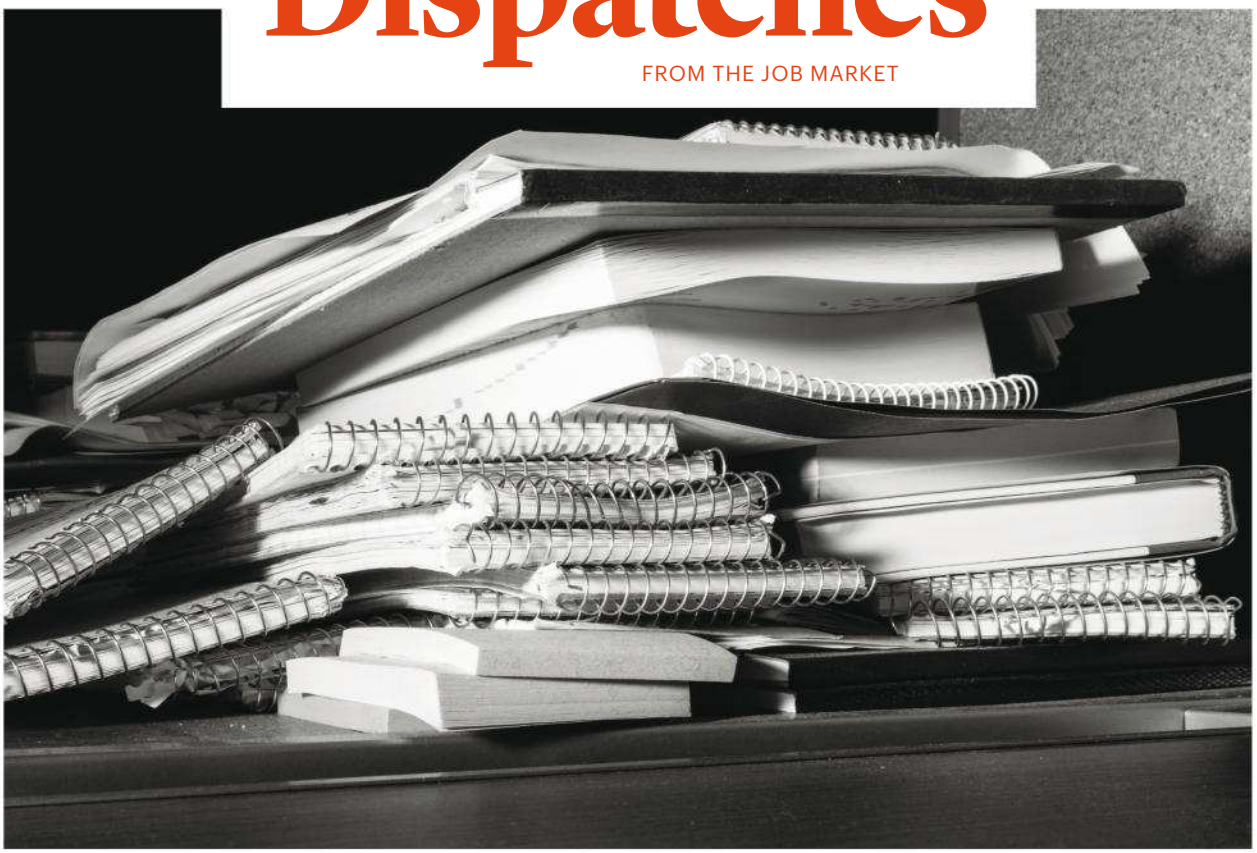


SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, and Current Employment Statistics survey



Dispatches

FROM THE JOB MARKET



WILLIAM MEBANE

LEAVING JOURNALISM

Occupational Hazard

By Tish Durkin

On a rainy midnight in March 2003, I found myself holding a trash bag containing my passport, a wad of cash, and a Dell laptop, all quintuple-wrapped in plastic, on the banks of the Tigris river. I was literally stuck in the mud between a huge, impassive Norwegian and a small, scrappy Brit, both named Paul. A few months earlier, I had quit my job as a DC-based opinion columnist for *National Journal* to freelance in Iraq during a war that I felt I was on the verge of missing entirely. Along with what seemed like every other journalist in the world, the Pauls and I had been holed up in northern Syria, awaiting official permission to cross the border into what was still Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Permission was nowhere in sight, so we decided to try floating. We'd spent the past few days preparing for the journey, acquiring a bicycle pump, some inner tubes, and a bunch of empty water bottles to make a flotation device. We pre-bribed a taxi driver to drop us illegally close to the border, but we hadn't counted on the rain, which made two-legged puddles of us and a savage of the river. Norwegian Paul took one look at the rushing waters and declared, "We will drown." Turning back, we assumed we'd be arrested, and in

SONIA PULIDO

short order we were, by a kid who jumped out of nowhere waving an AK-47. At that moment, half of me hoped we'd get safely back to the dusty old guesthouse where we'd been trapped for days. The other half would have gladly been shot for a story.

As I type this close to midnight in March 2018, I find myself in a kitchen in Princeton, New Jersey. It is my kitchen, and so it is a mess. If you were coming over, I'd have to shove the Purell, sunglasses, Girl Scout cookies, and stray jar lids off the big granite island that looked very *Architectural Digest* at the moment we moved in, and not at any moment since. Appliances are whirring; the refrigerator, which needs replacing, is actually ticking. Everybody is asleep: the daughter, the son, the husband, the cat. When they wake up, they will all expect my day to revolve around theirs, and it will. In the 13 years since I left Iraq—for in the end, I did get in—I have basically become my own opposite. As a 36-year-old jobbing reporter, based some 18 months in Baghdad, I filed pieces for *National Journal*, the *New York Observer*, *The Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone*, even *O, The Oprah Magazine*. Today, I write almost entirely for myself. My only brushes with the law involve expired parking meters. The only rifles I see are on TV. The only place I float is in my mind.

On my next attempt to get into Iraq, a few days after the raft to nowhere, I went through Jordan. There, I made the acquaintance of four men, all strangers to me and mostly strangers to each other. They had arranged two taxis to make the 17-hour drive to Baghdad and agreed to let me buy a ride. Unbeknownst to me at the time, they had a coin toss to see which car would have to take me. About a year and a half later, I married the guy who lost.

Clearly, neither marriage itself, nor the motherhood that followed, should have scuttled my career. It was the odd set of circumstances that surrounded my entry into both. Had I still been at *National Journal*, for example, it would not have entered my head to quit my job upon starting a family. Nor would I have cashed in my previous, four-year gig as a political writer for the *New York Observer* when Rudy Giuliani ruled the city and Hillary Clinton was just swooping into the state. Continuing to freelance in a war zone was, for me at least, out of the question. Just before our wedding on New Year's Eve 2004, my fiancé and I had searched for a convenient base from which to travel to and from Baghdad.

After the honeymoon, we settled in Madrid, a fantastic city where I had no background, no contacts, and barely a word of the language. What I did have, almost immediately, was morning sickness.

Far be it from me to suggest that pregnancy makes women stupid, but mine certainly did not mark my finest intellectual hour. At the time, I had a great assignment for *Rolling Stone*…if only I could stop with the throwing up and marathon sleeping. For the first and only time in my entire career, I just punted completely. I put the piece off and put it off in expectation of that later-stage surge of wellness I'd read about, but in the end, never experienced. That, in fact, was my strategy regarding the rest of my life: Once the baby was born, I'd figure everything out, career included. Meanwhile, I was way too tired, fat, and focused on learning to say "my water broke" in Spanish.

Retrospect is such a fickle frenemy. Sometimes, I chide myself for being so cavalier about tossing away a career I had worked so hard to build. Other times, I cut myself some slack, because back in 2005, I didn't realize I was doing anything of the sort. I thought I was taking time off to start a family I never dreamed I'd have. What's more, I had no idea what a shock-and-awe bombardment lay in store for journalism, or for me. Of course, I knew both were undergoing a period of profound change. But the digital age had yet to bring anything like its full force to bear on the media—and parenthood had yet to hint at its elaborate plans for me.

And it's not as if I was bored. If you want to learn a new country, have a baby in one. It would be hard to imagine a deeper dive into the whole societal paella, from real estate to human rights—and of course, healthcare. In 2000, in the course of covering Hillary Clinton's first Senate race, I'd prided myself on my immersion in the policy nitty-gritty of her signature issue. Healthcare, daycare, disability-care, elder-care—back in my political-reporting days, I used to take the presence of the word "care" in an issue's appellation as a sure sign that nobody cared about it. But only when I had my own children did I realize how true that is, and how calamitous. Not that my foray into motherhood was particularly daunting. On the contrary, thanks to my husband's very comfortable perch in the tech sector, it was infinitely easier than most women's. I wasn't even trying to achieve work-life balance; I just leapt from "work" to "life." Even so, I could suddenly see how hard that balance is for parents to strike; what injustice it is for "parents" nearly always to mean "mothers"; what dimwit misogyny it is to treat its achievement not as an economically vital, systemically promoted outcome, but as a circus trick, meriting applause for those who can manage it, catcalls for those who can't.

Only in being forced to slow down as a writer did I come to learn anything at all about my reader.

Time sped. Work faded further as life became voracious in its demands. My son's birth, 21 months after my daughter's, was brutal. Mathias nearly died, but he didn't. On account of my husband's career, we proceeded with plans to move to Ireland, where Mathias seemed fine, although he wasn't. As he grew from baby to toddler, the sense of something wrong began subtly to stalk us—the words he didn't form, the odd tendencies. But on a three-month family stay in China, he became both more manic and more mute. I hoped it was the total strangeness we were always strolling him into—the snapping turtles in the display cases at the supermarket, the hordes of people who'd spring up, paparazzi-like, to snap photos of both blond, blue-eyed kids. But back home, he fixed his gaze even further afield. It was autism.

It was, in fact, full-on, no-eye-contact, no-language, shreds-the-newspaper-and-eats-it autism. Mathias bit and hit and ran away. He ate nothing but oatmeal cookies, Tic Tacs, and Pringles, also known as the "super-severe constipation diet." For the first six or seven years of his life, he hardly slept.

I hate to say all that, even in the mercifully past tense, because it sounds as if I am a martyr and my son a monster, two notions you'd laugh out the door if you knew us. But it does furnish the second reason I left journalism: Motherhood put me on hiatus. Autism canceled the show.

For a while, I tried bitterly hard to make the show go on. Delighted to land an online biweekly column for *The Week*, I couldn't even churn out that much. The only important-feeling pieces I produced, largely by way of blasting the special-needs apparatus of my otherwise-beloved Ireland, were about autism—the subject I had come to know best, but hate most.

Then, slowly, the wheel turned. My son started eating, sleeping, asking for an Oreo. After years of family-splitting trans-Atlantic shuttling in search of quality therapies, we all landed under one New Jersey roof. Mathias started going to a special school, every day, *on a bus!* For the first time in a decade, I started to settle back into writing. After Donald

Trump was elected, *Elle* assigned me a profile of Kellyanne Conway. It felt like being thawed out of a cryogenic stupor and freed back into life. I write daily now, though rarely to deadline: fiction, plays, and blog posts. And for the first time ever, I know how.

Oh, sure, I used to know tons of things. I used to know all about voter turnout and swing districts; gaffes and polls and wedge issues. Later, I knew all about WMD, IED's, RPG's, the Sunn'i, the Shi'a, and multiple kinds of Kurd. But I had no concept of the blur into which such elements blend in the eyes of almost everyone. I had no idea how easy it is to get slammed out of the blue by an unforeseen force, how hard it is to maintain a sense of power or even personhood when that happens. I could not grasp how anyone could be so consumed by the business of getting through the day as to experience current events as noise. I grasp it now. Only in being forced to slow way down as a writer did I come to understand anything at all about my reader.

That is, if my reader still exists. For all I know, while I was achieving metaphysical mindmeld with the masses, they all swam off on the tide of Twitter. The industry has changed so fundamentally, but then again, so have I. Who knows whether journalism in its current form has a place for me in mine?

In case you're wondering what happened with that muddy midnight in 2003, in the end, the Syrian authorities did nothing worse to the two Pauls and me than boot us back to Damascus. Before going, we had one last night in the guesthouse, and we drank it away with, among others, the legendary Marie Colvin, who'd turned up—eyepatch, cigarette, and all—on her own way to the war.

Nine years, two kids, and one autism diagnosis later, I was home in Ireland when I heard that Colvin had been killed by an Assad-regime bombardment of a media center in Homs. Not long after, I caught a BBC interview of the photojournalist who had been with her, and barely escaped alive. It was Paul Conroy. British Paul.

"He's still at it," I thought. "Good for him."

Four years later, in the fall of 2016, while stuck in traffic on Route One after dropping Mathias off at school, I switched on the radio. NPR was introducing a piece about an amazing-sounding documentary made by an amazing-sounding journalist, who had spent a long time hanging out with suicide bombers in Syria, dispassionately interviewing them about their outlook and operations. The journalist's voice came on, and suddenly the calm, Scandinavian tone combined with the lunatic bravery clicked for me in the car. It was Paul Refsdal. Norwegian Paul. "He's still at it," I thought. "Good for him."

Both times, my very next thought was that I, of course, am not still at it—not by the longest possible shot. CJR

AFTER HOURS

Confessions of a Serial Networker

By Ana Marie Cox

Before I got sober, I often joked that I became a journalist because it's one of the few professions where drinking on the job isn't just allowed, but practically required. Now I'm pretty sure that wasn't a joke.

I was not invited to my first exclusive Washington party. Rather, a reader of my blog who was at the Radio & Television Correspondents' Association dinner sent me a tip that the event seemed under-attended and no one was checking to see if guests had tickets. These were the Bush years, and the RTCA dinner was a kind of poorer cousin to the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. "If you wear something fancy and act like you belong here, you'll probably get in." This is good advice for life in general, and it worked in this instance, too.

Aside from the giggling giddiness of just getting in, I don't remember much about the event, primarily because I was drunk. But the kludgy, fickle archives of the blog I edited happen to have successfully preserved the "pool report" I filed on the evening, and in the nervous light of today it seems…indistinguishable from any other periodically exclusive Washington party thrown since then, right up to today. Omarosa was there.

The lazily themed after-parties (one was "disco") had open bars, and attendees gravitated to whatever not-Washington celebrities made an appearance. The biggest pleasure was in eavesdropping on people most Americans would not recognize as being worth eavesdropping on. (Joe Trippi: "Yes, I threw a cell phone. I guess I'm the only campaign manager in the history of the world to ever lose his temper.") Reading my coverage now, I can't tell if I was genuinely excited about the event or parodying others' excitement or just playing along with the conceit that there was any reason to be there at all.

During the years I covered Washington as a quasi-pundit media gadfly (roughly, the second Bush term through Obama's first term), I believed going to parties like the RTCA dinner was part of my job. It would be more accurate to say I *made* going to them my job; I turned them into content, at least.

Did I have fun? I think so, sometimes. I liked a lot of the people who went to them, and they were staging grounds for other, less performative gatherings, as well as an opportunity to put names with faces. They were parties, after all. What I find so baffling in retrospect is that they seemed so *important*, and that Washington has an entire culture that facilitates the illusion of their importance: generations of breathless coverage about what are essentially industry parties that bear greater resemblance to the last night of a regional sales meeting than the Golden Globes.

During the Obama years, a lot of effort went into trend pieces about how Barack and Michelle made Washington "cool." But in the seven years I was around, the presence of the occasional genuine celebrity in DC was more than offset by a deep plunge in the value of a boldface name. But what did I get out of these dim-star-studded gatherings?

Little happens at Washington cocktail parties that couldn't happen somewhere else, and a fair number of things happen at them that shouldn't happen anywhere.

A few connections. Some amusing anecdotes. A shelf full of books I never even pretended to plan to read by second-tier political consultants and forgettable congressmen who only barely pretended to write them. Mostly, I got a fuzzy sense that I was on the inside of something—that I had access other people didn't.

This delicate conviction of mine should probably be kept separate from debates about "access journalism," though it might be related. I am prepared to believe that the politico-journalist community suffers from imposter syndrome at a somewhat higher rate than the rest of the world. But I know for sure that a constant monologue of self-doubt was my own date for most of these parties, though I could keep her quiet by working the room and—even more effectively—plying her with booze. The next day's hangover would inevitably amplify and add ammunition to her litany of failures, but I might have a "SPOTTED" mention to show her—flimsy evidence of my value, but at times the only value I thought I had.

I knew I was using alcohol (and a small selection of other substances) as a crutch. The difference between more-or-less-harmless social lubrication and addiction is the inability to let go of the chemicals even after the crutch has become a weapon—and to pine for it when it's gone, no matter what pain it's caused.

I kept trying to quit, and I could even go a few days, maybe a week or two, without. Still, social situations where alcohol was present were excruciating—and yet I persisted in attending, insisting to others and myself that I was *fine I was fine just fine fine thankyouverymuch*, despite a sense that my itchy skin was two sizes too small and my heart pounding so hard it was about to burst.

Toward the end, I had a new ritual: Instead of putting away a few or five glasses of wine at the open bar, I'd sip gingerly at my club soda, feeling as distant and fragile as if I were the one encased in glass. I'd gracelessly mingle until I couldn't stand it anymore and then make for the restroom, where I'd sob as silently as possible, chest tight not with grief but a burning mix of self-pity and anger. In the hot resentments of my addiction, I extrapolated beyond the adolescent conviction that "everyone was having fun without me"; I mourned that everyone else was absentmindedly partaking in something that was *only* a recreational drug for them, whereas for me it was a cure.

So, of course, I'd eventually drink, a failure of willpower I could tally as evidence of my inherent worthlessness. It would take months of grinding through the motions of sobriety—all the meetings and sayings and steps and prayers—before I finally came to realize that succumbing to

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my addiction was never a sign that I was weak. I was just looking to the wrong things for strength.

I don't remember my last Washington soirée, but I vividly recall the last party I wanted to go to. I went to rehab a few weeks before the 2011 White House Correspondents' Association dinner. If I had stayed the typical 28 days, it would have landed me back in town *just in time*. After the seriousness of my addiction made it clear that my stay needed to be extended, "but the President will be there" was an actual, earnest argument I made for leaving as originally scheduled. My counselor's counterargument—"You could die"—was the one that seemed overdramatic. In the end, I relented, but not with any particular grace.

I called Rent the Runway to cancel my dress from the brick-like landline phone in the hallway of my unit; I am pretty sure I cried. (To be fair, almost all phone calls in treatment centers end in tears.) I begged my counselor for computer time so I could un-RSVP from the after-parties, but I'd been restricted from the internet ("too triggering"). She was pretty nonchalant about me missing what was so clearly Very, Very Important. "It's work!" I pleaded. "I have to go for *work*."

"I think they'll survive," she said. "And so will you."

In the beginning, I wasn't sure. Who was I if I wasn't on a list? Who was I without a byline? If someone isn't "spotted," are they, in fact, invisible?

Those questions became less important as I got on with just trying to make it through the day sober. It may have helped that I went to several meetings a week where I was not just recognized, but people, as a group, shouted my name. It was only my first name, but in those rooms, no one used their last.

After four months of treatment, I left DC behind. I was 38 and I went to live in a halfway house where I had chores and a curfew. Very few of my housemates were interested in cable news—the TV in the shared living area was usually tuned to the Country Music Channel. The 2012 election was just starting to take shape, but our heated debates were about who forgot to put a liner in the trash can, and *did someone make an unauthorized long-distance call?* My roommate (and by this, I mean the person I shared my room with) liked the various *CSI* and *Law & Order* flavors mostly, but once when we were channel surfing she lingered on a panel of pundits. "I know that guy," I told her, experimenting with the idea of letting people know who I used to be. "Huh," she said.

Eventually, I started writing about politics again. Eventually, I started going on television again. I have visited DC occasionally, even. Others can evaluate whether my journalism has suffered from my lack of physical proximity to the Capitol; I can tell you that people regularly assume I still live there, and I am not sure whether I take it as a compliment or a slight. I have come to realize that little happens at Washington cocktail parties that couldn't happen somewhere else, and a fair number of things happen at them that shouldn't happen anywhere. My disappearance from that particular scene has also handily sorted out those people I am actually friends with from those people I was merely happy to see.

It's been seven years since I went to what can properly be called a Washington cocktail party, and in that time the only black-tie event I've been to was Samantha Bee's "Not the White House Correspondents' Dinner," which was, obviously, not the Correspondents' Dinner.

I was going to list all the ways the Bee event was different, but the most salient comparison isn't between Bee's event and a typical Washington party, but between who I am now and who I was then. I can remember most of what happened at the Bee party. I left early. I wore flats. I don't really care if I'm invited back. CJR

ECONOMICS

When the Math Doesn't Work

By Meg Dalton

I landed my first full-time journalism job in early 2016, when I was 26. It was a business reporter gig at the *Greenwich Time*, a small daily newspaper in southwestern Connecticut. For years, I had tried to break into the industry. With zero experience—I couldn't afford unpaid internships—my (probably) ill-conceived pitches got me nowhere, and rejection emails flooded my inbox. I eventually convinced an online news site, MediaShift,

to take a chance on me, at least on a part-time basis. The pay was meager, the hours minimal. But it was a start.

When I got the *Greenwich Time* offer, I felt an unexpected mix of excitement—and dread. The salary was $35,000. To pay my bills, I had to keep my part-time job as an associate editor with MediaShift, and moonlight as a freelance graphic designer, one of the many hats I've worn as I've tried to make a living through creative pursuits.

For those months when I essentially worked three jobs, most days started at 5:15am to draft the MediaShift newsletter, schedule tweets and Facebook posts, and occasionally edit some freelance copy. Then around 8:30, I'd head to the newsroom in Greenwich, a 15-minute drive away, where I'd report and write until 6:30. At night, over frozen dinners, I'd look over more drafts for MediaShift, and then spend hours in Photoshop and Illustrator and InDesign to meet deadlines for my design clients.

My health started to deteriorate. I gained 20 pounds in three months. I developed insomnia. I went back on antidepressants. Taking a step forward professionally meant several steps backward in every other part of my life.

Of course, my experience isn't unique: A second job (or a third) is becoming a necessity for many young journalists, especially those just starting out. Ours is a generation that *knows*, going in, we're unlikely to make enough money in one full-time job alone to make ends meet. Reporters who entered the industry before the Great Recession—or the Digital Reckoning, or however you want to classify the past decade—have witnessed the gradual withering of their livelihoods, as salaries have flatlined and jobs disappeared. Many of those journalists have been forced to find other sources of income.

But my generation has always known the math doesn't add up. For me, and many unseasoned journalists, our careers are now a calculation of the pluses and minuses of doing the work.

The craft of journalism is invaluable. Those who practice it are not. In a profession that was once working class, those who are lucky enough to not depend on their meager paychecks tend to be from more privileged upbringings—and that transition has had a serious impact on coverage.

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Meg Fair takes home more money at a pizza shop than she does writing at her alt-weekly. Her salary averages to $15 an hour at the *Pittsburgh City Paper*, where she has been a music writer since 2016. Since she moved to Pittsburgh for the job, she's been pulling in extra cash in the restaurant industry—first at a church turned hot-dog shop called Franktuary and then at Spak Brothers Pizza. With tips, she estimates she makes between $16 and $20 per hour.

Fair works shifts the entire weekend to complete a seven-day workweek. By the time she closes the shop Sunday night, she is exhausted: "That's when I feel it the most," she says. "I'm mopping, and my whole body hurts." Between the two jobs, Fair clocks about 65 hours of work per week.

She's still young, in her early 20s, but the lifestyle is already wearing on her: "My body is definitely older than 22 years old," she tells me. Working nonstop means less time, or no time, socializing with friends. Her lifestyle breeds a certain loneliness, an unhelpful counterpart to chronic depression, which she's suffered from much of her life. "There are definitely moments when I'm actively dissociating at my desk," she says, "and then I feel guilty." Twice now, she's answered her office phone with a friendly, "Spak Brothers, what can I get for you?"

I spoke with Kat Lonsdorf, a producer at NPR's *All Things Considered*, as she was walking to her second job—as a server at The Pub & The People in Washington, DC—on a recent Sunday morning. The 30-year-old spent most of her 20s tending bar and waiting tables in Los Angeles, having graduated

college during the recession. When she decided to make a career transition to journalism, she applied to Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, graduating with a master's degree in 2016. Lonsdorf then landed her dream internship at NPR, but with the burden of student debt and a minimum-wage salary, it was untenable to live in the nation's capital without a second gig.

Yes, Lonsdorf was sleep-deprived and overworked, but her biggest concern was the craft itself: How was her balancing act disrupting the time and effort she could dedicate to her profession, the one she spent thousands (upon thousands) of dollars getting a degree in? "I would hide in the liquor closet at the bar and be responding to emails while working my shift at the pub," she says. "I remember crying one time because I was so tired and so stressed out after getting an email about rescheduling something, and was like, 'I can't do this anymore.'"

Dan Q. Dao, 24, a full-time journalist and part-time bartender in New York City, says he's always understood that being a journalist comes with a balancing act: "If you weren't willing to do whatever it took to stay in this industry," he says, "you shouldn't have gotten into it in the first place." Dao spends his days writing and editing on a freelance basis, with previous full-time stints at *Time Out New York* and *Saveur*. At night, he heads to a speakeasy in the Murray Hill neighborhood, Middle Branch, and slings cocktails to supplement his income.

The craft of journalism is invaluable. Those who practice it are not. In a profession that was once working-class, those who are lucky enough to not depend on their meager paychecks tend to be from more privileged upbringings—and that transition has had a serious impact on the coverage of different socioeconomic strata.

Between the financial insecurity and the sleep deprivation, I had to ask myself, *Is it worth it?*

Fair, like me, was raised in a family for which meeting ends didn't come easy. "I'm always prepared or expecting to do more work than average," she says. As a first-generation college student from working-class roots, she sees the future of journalism, and the role of people like her in it, as grim.

"The more newsrooms are diverse class-wise, the more fruitful and intersectional coverage will be. If you don't have a single person in your newsroom who comes from a blue-collar background, or knows what it's like to wipe down tables at the end of night, they'll never be able to empathize when they're writing stories about things like workers' movements, or communities displaced by gentrification," Fair says. "If you don't have that experience, or at least [a connection] to someone that does, it's easier to turn a blind eye to the multidimensional struggles people have."

There was a moment, two months into my beleaguered balancing act, when I broke. It was in the bathroom stall of a concert venue in Worcester, Massachusetts. My then-boyfriend, two pals, and I had packed into a car for the two-hour drive up, to see the final performance of a hardcore punk band, Bane.

Maybe it was the stench of caked urine. Or the guttural wails from the stage, shrieking through my body. Or the weeks of working without pause. My heart thumped, my limbs wobbled, my head whirled as my stomach went hot. I spent maybe 15 minutes in the stall, but my experience of time suffered one of the defining talents of panic attacks. Time became a vacuum.

When I walked out of that stall—in my mind hours later, perhaps days—I was torn, but awakened. In the days that followed, I obsessed over my decision to take the reporting job, or to even pursue a career as a journalist. The stall (the dual meanings of that word feel poignant to me now) was a reset. In the moment, too concerned with keeping myself upright and alive, I didn't understand its real weight. But removed from those urine-splattered walls, I understood the attack as an incarnation of the toll from my jobs. Between the financial insecurity, the weight gain, and the sleep deprivation, I had to ask myself, *Is it worth it?*

A month later, I quit the job at the *Greenwich Time* I had so coveted. I had applied to journalism school earlier that year—at the time, I viewed it in the short term, as an escape from my present distress and as a way to hopefully push my journalism career into hyperdrive (the jury is still out on that one). I was lucky enough to land a more stable, better-paying fellowship (at CJR) when I graduated from Columbia last year. But my mountain of debt, coupled with the insane cost of living in New York City, hasn't changed my situation much. Like many journalists, I've had to take on a few teaching and freelance gigs to get by. And sometimes that isn't even enough. There were times, this past winter, when I found myself selling old clothes almost every weekend to afford my weekly MetroCard. I'm still debating whether to donate my eggs to pay off the credit card debt I acquired in graduate school.

The ticket stub from that mosh pit of a night is still in my wallet. Every so often, I pull it out, look at it, and check in—*Is it worth it?* So far, the answer has been *yes*. But someday that *yes* may look more like a *no*. CJR


WINNER!
80
79
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77
Become a staff writer! *Healthcare not included.
Given a 10-post-a-day blog quota.
76
Duped into being a Russian troll for the Internet Research Company.
61
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112
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CHECKING IN
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56
Blurb on photo about sign reading "poop" becomes the most popular article you've ever written.
Accidentally graduate from J-school during a financial crisis. Take a menial job to pay off your student loans while writing for free at local street press for exposure.
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Invited to be part of an all-white, all-male panel on the future of journalism.
40
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Unionize your workplace to earn a living wage.
Accidentally tagged in alt-right Twitter war.
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16
Scoops and Layoffs
The classic up-and-down game, now for journalists!
by Nomi Kane + The Nib
17
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4
Free bagels in break room!
Get a real paid internship at local paper!
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75
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RE: CHECKING IN
73
72
71
You get an intern! It's the boss's son. You're training him to do your job.
66
67
68
69
Get into an argument on Twitter with cable news host, gain 100 followers. Congratulations! You've gone viral.
Article falls through on press day, resort to interviewing local tap-dancing dog.
70
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401K
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COPY CHANGE
211
BENEFITS!!!!!
46
48
401K
50
Your boss quits journalism—which means you're promoted!
Unionize your workplace - have your publication closed by your billionaire internet overlord.
31
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Sit through six hours of city council testimony.
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RE: RE: CHECKING IN
SCOOP! Local mayor is arrested—you get a national byline!
Collaborate with someone who actually knows what they're doing.
THE NIB
10

A DEBATE

Do We Need J-Schools?

PRO

Yes, More Than Ever

By Bill Grueskin

One of the things we teach in journalism school is the need to scrutinize your sources' motives. Why are these people talking to you? What's in it for them?

So let's start with a little disclosure: I'm a professor and former academic dean at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism (which also publishes this journalism review). My salary and benefits depend, in large part, on ensuring that a steady stream of students continue to enroll and pay tuition here.

Could anyone be more biased?

Perhaps not. But give me a few minutes, anyway, because these ideas are based more on the 30 years of journalism work I did before Columbia, and the changes I've seen in the industry since, than on the nearly 10 years I've been on campus.

The best place to start is in Baltimore, 1981, when I was a rookie reporter for a feisty, beleaguered evening newspaper, the *News-American*.

One day, the paper sent me to cover a shooting south of the city. A police officer had pulled over a motorist, then shot and killed the man as he attempted to retrieve his vehicle registration from the trunk of his car. I headed to the scene, interviewed the police spokesman and some neighbors, and drove to a pay phone to call the rewrite desk.

The editor typed up my dictation and then asked me: "While I've got you…what's the middle initial of that police spokesman?"

I wasn't sure, but I didn't want to look like I'd forgotten to get such basic information. So, figuring—idiotically—that I could correct it once I got off the phone, I replied with my 1-in-26 guess: "Um, I believe that his middle initial is…M."

The editor screamed, "His middle initial is S. It is not M. And if you ever fuck up something so basic again, I will fire you on the spot!"

I tell that story because it helps to explain why I didn't go to journalism school. It also helps to explain why I think young reporters ought to consider it.

The *News-American* died in 1986. But what that newspaper, and that editor, represented—the kind of in-house training that many news organizations were known for—is dying out as well.

Of course, journalists need certain qualities that can't be taught: curiosity, intelligence, and empathy, among others. But a lot *can* be taught, and learned, in journalism—how to distinguish a great story from a good one, how to get people to talk, how to verify information, how to use digital tools to create and distribute your journalism, how not to get sued, or how to defend yourself if you do.

I didn't go to journalism school, because I understood that most newsrooms had editors who would kick my ass if I got something wrong, and who would train me to be the reporter I wanted to be.

Some newsrooms still have editors who will teach you that, but there are fewer all the time. One reason is financial: If you're a publisher who has to cut a budget, the editing desk is often the first place to go. And another reason is the ethos of some digital startups, which hold (wrongly, in my view) that errors can be corrected in real time as readers tell the reporter (or the world, via Twitter) what was screwed up.

So the traditional career path for journalists doesn't teach what it used to. It doesn't mean that young journalists don't need to know those things. It just means they're not as likely to learn them on the job.

Many young journalists will never work in a traditional newsroom. That's great, but that means they could, very early in their careers, be

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posting their own stories and headlines with little or no oversight.

Which brings us to another reason for journalism school.

I messed up a few stories when I was a reporter, but there's almost no way to find my corrections, short of looking through archives at libraries in Bismarck, Tampa, and Baltimore. But now, if you make a serious mistake, it becomes part of your digital trail, not just for a few weeks after the story is published, but for years. A journalism degree won't prevent you from ever making a mistake, but it will give you the knowledge you'll need to avoid making most of the worst ones.

So those are some of the defensive reasons for coming to J-school. But there are offensive ones as well.

The main one is this: Many journalism schools are becoming hothouses of innovation and research for the news business. This is a big shift. J-schools used to see themselves largely as training grounds for the cannon fodder that would head off to local radio and TV stations and newspapers. They failed to recognize the historic role universities have played in providing insight and research for industries.

That is changing, and fast. Journalism professors have seen how timidity and slow-wittedness have hampered the news business, and they're responding, either because they fear the consequences of a shrinking job market on enrollment, or because they understand the opportunity and duty that confront higher education.

At Northwestern University, journalism students in the NUvention program and the Knight Lab Studio work with professors in engineering and communications to design tech-driven projects in media.

Arizona State University students are working with faculty and companies to invent new ways of doing local broadcast journalism—a field that has for too long relied on the same, tired "Back to you, Karen" formats.

New York University's journalism program has teamed up with the Netherlands' De Correspondent platform to figure out how to engage readers so thoroughly that they'll sustain a robust investigative news site.

And close to home, Columbia's Tow Center has led the way on critical research about digital journalism; as just one example, look at its examination of how Russian ad networks manipulated Facebook's lax controls. Meanwhile, the Brown Center for Media Innovation funds grants for joint projects between students in Columbia's journalism and Stanford University's computer-science programs.

Not every journalism student will take part in such projects, and many will stick with traditional training in newswriting or broadcast skills, or take a stab at data analysis and visualization. But the impact of these programs spreads beyond those who participate; at forward-looking schools, they raise the bar for even the most tradition-bound faculty.

We're fortunate in this country that journalists are neither licensed nor regulated. No government body requires reporters or editors to have a degree, and I've never met a journalism professor or dean who suggests that should change. Many journalists, including those starting and ending their careers, have done illustrious work without formal training.

And any undergraduate journalism program should leave students room to take courses in literature, history, and economics, while ensuring they hone their writing and numeracy skills.

But a strong journalism program will help young reporters challenge their presumptions and prejudices, will encourage them to meet people and go to neighborhoods outside their comfort zone, and will force them to develop the resilience that journalists need, especially now.

The best programs will also enable students to develop the intellectual dexterity to deal with unending technological change, so journalism can emerge more interesting and more dynamic than ever before. CJR

CON

No, and They Should Not Exist

By Felix Salmon

When it comes to journalism school, there are two questions. The first is the tough one, and was asked and answered by Michael Lewis in a blistering (and very funny) takedown in *The New Republic* in 1993: Is it all bullshit? The answer then was a clear *yes*.

In the 25 years since Lewis wrote his article, the occupation of journalism has become more precarious than ever: Joseph Pulitzer's plan to "raise journalism to the rank of a learned profession" rings hollow in an age of Chartbeat, post quotas, and pay-per-pageview. If you meet a theologian today, or a lawyer, or a doctor, it's reasonable to assume they have studied deeply and learned a lot in order to do their job. That's not the case with journalism, nor should it be; even J-school's staunchest defenders don't consider a journalism degree to be a necessary prerequisite for anybody entering the field.

Thus have the contours of the debate stood for at least a quarter century. On one side, we find people who think a journalism degree can be a useful way to learn skills that come in handy while editing and reporting;

Response From Grueskin

I always enjoy Felix Salmon's writing. I enjoy it even more when it's accompanied by reporting.

And there's the problem with his anti–J-school screed. There's no evidence of interviews with students, faculty, or alumni. Indeed, outside of a 1993 *New Republic* article and a few references to tuition costs, Salmon spends most of his time mooshing antiquated views of journalism education with a vaporous claim that J-school degrees further inequality in newsrooms.

It's useful to remember that journalism education occurs at many places beyond the southeast corner of 116th Street and Broadway (where Columbia's graduate school sits). There are more than 100 journalism programs—many of them undergraduate—around the US, and dozens more overseas.

Salmon's main point, though, appears to be that journalism schools spit out an elite layer of young reporters who crowd out diverse, lower-income people from the business.

But Salmon didn't need to leave his cubicle to learn the problem with that idea. He could've simply clicked a few times on Twitter and seen this recent thread from Lydia Polgreen, a Columbia alumna who became editor in chief of The Huffington Post after an illustrious career as a foreign correspondent at *The New York Times*: "There is approximately zero chance I would have ended up with the career I have without the networks I built at journalism school," she wrote, citing a Slate article by Rachelle Hampton, another African-American journalist. (Hampton graduated from Northwestern.)

I'm sure many journalism instructors would be happy to have Salmon stop by, so he can see what is taught and learned in their classrooms. And they might enjoy reading the column that would come from doing the reporting we teach every day.

Response From Salmon

I've been a professional reporter for 23 years, during which time I've never known, nor felt the need to know, the middle initial of any spokesperson. And while I'm sure there are lots of people at Columbia J-School with smart social-media insights and digital photography skills, I doubt most of them are on the faculty. I also defy you to find me a decent journalist whose bullshit detector doesn't automatically start ringing whenever she's pitched a program bearing a name like "NUvention."

Bill Grueskin seems to agree with me that on-the-job training is better than going to J-school. But I reject his defeatist attitude that today's journalists can no longer learn on the job. And I certainly reject his privileged and elitist stance that the enormous financial costs of J-school are so trivial as to not be worth mentioning even once.

Still, I'm happy to let a third party decide this debate. Let's find that grizzled Baltimore editor and ask *him* whether he would advise anybody to spend $216,928 on a two-year graduate journalism degree, or whether it's conscionable to offer such a degree in the first place. I suspect the answer will be brief, and unambiguous.

on the other, more perspicacious types look around, see that many of the greatest journalists have no such degree, and can find no evidence that a J-school education correlates in any way with better work.

Perhaps it is worth asking a more pointed question: Should J-school even exist?

For anybody on Lewis's side of the original question, the answer is easy. If J-school is indeed bullshit, if it adds no value to the world, if it has signally failed in more than a century of existence to raise journalism to the rank of a learned profession—well, then, it has no real ability to justify its existence, and the world would be better off without it. But the fact is that *everybody* should concede that the world would be better off without J-school, no matter how noble they consider Pulitzer's original undertaking.

Indeed, the more useful J-school is, the more urgent and important its abolition becomes. A useless J-school is a waste of time and money for those who go there, offset by the benefit that accrues to teachers and other recipients of the students' tuition. The net effect is negative, but the only people suffering real harm are the students. What's more, it's easy to avoid that harm: Don't go to J-school. But what if the J-school defenders are right? What if J-school students really do end up with a significant advantage over those who don't share their credentials? In that case, even more people are harmed.

J-school attendees might get a benefit from their journalism degree, but it comes at an eye-watering cost. The price tag of the Columbia Journalism School, for instance, is $105,820 for a 10-month program, $147,418 for a 12-month program, or $108,464 *per year* for a two-year program. That's a $216,928 graduate degree, on top of all the costs associated with gaining the undergraduate prerequisites. (Columbia, it seems important to say, is also the publisher

SONIA PULIDO

of *Columbia Journalism Review*, the publication you're now reading.)

There are also substantial opportunity costs. Once you've graduated from a four-year college, you're eminently employable, and can enter the workforce immediately. If you delay your career by another year or two, you lose out on a significant amount of income as well as valuable professional experience. Even if you start working in journalism at minimum wage, after a year or two you're still going to be richer, more experienced, more employable, and almost certainly more skilled than someone who's spent that time getting a grad-school degree.

But what about the people who choose not to go to J-school? Here's their problem: When you're looking for that entry-level foot in the door, you're going to be competing against applicants a year or two older than you who have just spent six figures getting themselves a Columbia degree. And if that credential is worth even marginally more than nothing, those candidates are going to be more attractive to employers, and more likely to get the job.

The result is a crowding-out effect, whereby job-hunting J-school graduates, having already caused themselves substantial financial harm, then go on to harm any aspiring journalistic employee who was smart enough *not* go to J-school.

What does that mean in practice? It means a much less diverse workforce, at a time when newsroom diversity has perhaps never been more important. If you're poor, or working-class, or a rural person of color, or mobility-constrained, or a single mother struggling to bring up multiple children, or otherwise part of a group that has historically been underrepresented in newsrooms, is it *possible* for you to go to J-school? Sure. Is it *likely*? Not in the slightest. Is it *advisable*? It is not.

Yet you're exactly the kind of person news organizations should be spending more effort bringing into their ranks. Carl Bernstein never went to college; the journalistic profession needs more of his ilk, not fewer.

The best and simplest way to move toward that goal would be to abolish the graduate journalism degree entirely. That would help to level the playing field, while saving students billions of dollars in tuition. Better yet, it would bring the industry back to a model of on-the-job training. People wanting to enter the profession would get paid to learn the ropes. It's more effective, it's infinitely more real, and it focuses the mind: No one's going to fire you from J-school if you misspell the mayor's name in a headline.

Rather than putting money and effort into expensive trainee programs, news organizations no doubt will attempt to outsource their training to journalism schools, thereby getting someone else (anybody else!) to pay the cost. It's a false economy, because a well-run trainee or internship program is not only cheaper than J-school, it's also vastly more valuable.

So let's abolish J-school, or at the very least turn it into a purely academic subject no one can mistake for vocational training. By doing so, we will force the training back into the newsrooms, where it belongs. CJR

UNCLEAR

Maybe, But Cost Is Key

By Alexandria Neason

A teacher living in Indiana contacted me on Twitter early this spring. She is a former Teach for America corps member (as am I), and she'd just been accepted into Columbia Journalism School, of which I am an alumna. We had a lot in common: She is black. She studied journalism as an undergraduate student and completed several journalism internships. She'd taken an unexpected detour into the classroom. And now she was ready to write.

She wanted to know if I'd talk to her about my experience at Columbia. It was her dream school, she said, and she had a decision to make.

Debates over the necessity of a graduate-level journalism education aren't new. For years, working journalists have gathered into familiar camps to argue their points (see the two pieces preceding this one). Most people agree that journalism is a trade—there are rules and norms, and much of the reporting process involves skills that can be taught, refined, and updated. But where reporters should learn those skills—in a classroom or in a newsroom—remains a topic of hot debate.

Meantime, journalism schools have enjoyed their own version of the so-called Trump Bump (which also has goosed subscription numbers at news outlets around the country). A MarketWatch article published in mid-March reported on an increase in journalism school applications at universities around the country. Applications to the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism (which houses both undergraduate and graduate degree programs) spiked 19 percent over the past four years, and the school saw a record number of first-year journalism majors this year. Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications saw a 24 percent spike in undergraduate journalism applications over the last school year. And Columbia's graduate program saw a 10 percent increase this year.

Those reports inspired a round of spirited, sometimes scathing debate

about the worth of a journalism degree. Sopan Deb, a culture writer for *The New York Times*, said on Twitter that he wasn't suggesting journalism school had no benefits, but to "let internships be your J-school."

> "…is it worth tens of thousands in loans for a profession you will mostly learn on your own in the industry? No good journalist learns the craft inside a classroom. Like, you wouldn't trust a doctor who didn't go to med school. But there are a bunch of highly respected journalists who didn't go to school for it. (And bad ones who did.)"

Hamilton Nolan, a writer at Splinter News, was blunter. In an article titled "J-School Is a Scam," he advised wannabe reporters to simply dig up news, write it down, and then "find someone to pay you to do this activity."

Both sides tend eventually to zero in on the breathtaking costs of a graduate journalism school program. (The current estimated cost for a full-time master of science student at Columbia, a 10-month program, is $105,820, a truly bonkers amount given the median salary of working journalists.)

Newsrooms, Nolan points out, are still stubbornly homogeneous and not at all reflective of the communities they cover. Prohibitive costs make journalism school applicant pools less, not more, diverse. He's right. But so do fellowships and internships that don't pay living wages or, like so many jobs in journalism, rely on the narrow halls of nepotism and connections that routinely shut out marginalized people, the same people who are desperately needed in newsrooms across the country and have been for decades. If journalism school is an imperfect, excessively expensive "scam," then so are the tuition-less routes that have failed to produce the diverse news corps many say they want. The bottom line is that both—journalism school and the job market—exist within the same system of inequitable capitalism. Mocking a person's hesitance to trust that system, instead of denouncing the system itself, is a bit rich.

I'd already written off a future in which I purchased property; I started to view graduate school as my life's proverbial house.

Entering the field of journalism requires convincing someone to give you a shot. And it's easy for white men or anyone who enjoys some measure of privilege to underestimate just how incredibly difficult this can be for people of color, for women, for queer or disabled or low-income reporters. Rachelle Hampton, an editorial assistant at Slate, makes this point in a rebuttal to Nolan's article:

> "…the recycled take that journalism school is fundamentally useless is one that not only lacks nuance but one that assumes that the industry is a meritocracy. It's not."

When I started looking into a graduate degree in journalism, I did so with the primary aim of increasing my chances at tapping into the cronyism that the industry continues to fuel. I wasn't so naive as to believe a degree alone would get me the job I wanted; I understood that a degree wouldn't help me skip the line, so much as it would familiarize me with the people who decide who even gets to stand in it.

In my mind, journalism school wouldn't be a guarantee, but an opportunity—to practice and, perhaps more importantly, make relationships with people who could help me begin to build a career, people I had no real access to from Hawaii, where I lived when I applied. I looked at financing my degree like it was an investment. There was risk, but the potential payoff might be worth it. Then I looked at the cost of tuition at Columbia; that year, it cost $51,656, excluding fees. It scared the hell out of me, and maybe that's why I allowed my own insecurity to convince myself that getting in was a long shot, even if it was a way to help me break into the industry.

I was in the parking lot of a bank, as it happens, when I found out I'd been accepted. The following weeks were filled with early morning phone calls with my mom on the East Coast, six hours ahead, as we crunched numbers and considered what attending would mean for my financial future. My mother had financed law school in the 1980s with a loan that took her about 20 years to pay back; she owed $35,000 and ultimately paid about $70,000. She understood the long-term impact of loans and high interest rates. We considered how much money I was likely to make as a journalist; I was worried my salary wouldn't live up to the bills I'd be responsible for. But my mom seemed sure that, over time, if I hustled, I'd earn a decent wage and, with some budgetary discipline, be able to make monthly payments. And I'd be lying if the prestige of having been accepted to an Ivy League institution—the first in my family—didn't mean something to my parents, and thus to me.

By the time I decided to enroll, I'd already written off a future in which I purchased property; I started to view graduate school as my life's proverbial house.

Columbia initially offered me a $7,000 scholarship, and later increased that amount to $9,150. I didn't receive any other aid until my second semester, when I was awarded two other scholarships that brought my total to $14,596.

The hefty cost of attending weighed on me. I was surprised to have been offered so little financial aid. I recently asked 16 of my cohorts from the 2014 class for details on how they paid for journalism school. While the sample is not representative of my entire class, 75 percent of those I spoke with were offered university scholarships of amounts ranging from $1,500 to $20,000. Just over half said they used personal savings or received help from family members paying for tuition and other costs.

Seven respondents took out one or more federal loans to pay for tuition and living expenses, ranging from $20,400 to $90,000. And four respondents borrowed money from private banks, ranging from $35,000 to $70,000. Just writing the numbers here pains me.

In the end, I took out two federal loans—one subsidized—to pay for my tuition and for living expenses the year I was out of work. In total, I borrowed $82,778.69. I'm on a 25-year, income-based repayment plan, and I send about $325 per month to Navient.

The year I enrolled at Columbia, the program did away with its traditional tracking system. Students instead were allowed to take courses across a range of media, including video production, data, reporting and writing, radio, and television. Some classes, like the required audience and engagement course, were new (and deemed unhelpful by many of us). But others, like a narrative writing course I took in the fall, taught me how to report, organize, and write a longform story reported over several months—skills I'd need two years later when I got my first national magazine assignment from an editor at *Harper's*. An education reporting class taught by working journalists helped me transition out of being an educator and into learning how to report on one. One instructor, who was still actively writing for *The New York Times*, ran that class like a newsroom, and I am better for it. But how core classes ran depended largely on which professors you were assigned, and so the experience was inconsistent. We spent a huge portion of our 10 months in school working on a 5,000-word thesis that, for most of us, would never be published. Many of my classmates walked away feeling like the curriculum was lacking—in some ways, significantly.

But I can't ignore that just being a student at the school put me in a position to meet people who would, for nearly every job opportunity I had post-graduation, help me get hired. I did an internship at The Hechinger Report, an independent nonprofit education news outlet, the summer after I graduated; the organization chooses its interns almost exclusively from the education reporting class I took in the spring.

I spent two years as a fellow with the Columbia-based Teacher Project, where I was part of a team that acted as the education vertical for Slate. And after a year working first as a fellow and later as a staff writer at *The Village Voice*, I contacted my old professor Vanessa Gezari, then CJR's managing editor, and she encouraged me to apply for what would become my current position at CJR.

That I have a degree from Columbia isn't what matters. What does is that being a student here, particularly as a black woman, opened doors that may otherwise have stayed closed. Columbia has helped, and continues to help, me get not only in the line, but in the room. Even some of my most trusted mentors—people unaffiliated with Columbia—I met because of stories I chased as a student.

Has all of that been worth $82,778.69 in debt, plus interest? My debt didn't happen to me. I made a choice to borrow money, and today, I feel confident saying I regret taking out the loans. They have been the root of much worry and stress and anxiety over the past four years. Though my salary has risen steadily since I graduated, I still make less than $70,000. In New York City, that doesn't go far, even for a single person with no children.

I eventually called the teacher from Indiana, and we spoke at length about my experience at Columbia and about the kind of future she saw for herself in journalism. She has so far been offered no financial aid from Columbia, though she's been working a second job for several months to save money and is applying for external scholarships. And she's been accepted to two other journalism schools.

I told her what I tell everyone: Journalism school, especially at a place like Columbia (though not exclusively so), has real benefits to offer. But you shouldn't go unless you can secure significant funding to pay for it. I can't in good conscience encourage anyone—especially a woman of color, given the ever-stubborn wage gap—to incur the kind of debt I did, even if it will help open doors. I encouraged her to look into CUNY, a state school that, even for non-New Yorkers, costs half as much as both Columbia and Northwestern, the other schools she was accepted to, and offered financial aid (although both require you to stay out of the full-time workforce for two years, a big reason I gravitated away from those schools during my own search).

For now, my mental health requires that I not denigrate myself for understanding that opportunities are not handed out equally—having sought a way to give myself a chance at the career I wanted, even if it has cost me in ways I can't yet see. Even if I won't push someone else to take the same route. If anything, the persistence of this debate demonstrates less about the "right" or "wrong" way to learn journalism, and more about the multigenerational failure, from classroom to newsroom, to make the industry truly inclusive. CJR


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34-2 Current TV
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35-2 CNBC
36-1 MSNBC
37-1 Headline News
37-2 C-SPAN
38-1 C-SPAN2
38-2 Bloomberg
39-1 BBC America
39-2 Fox Business
40-1 Discovery

TODAY

The news has become faster, better, stronger. But how much is too much?

AUTHOR
Nikil Saval

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William Mebane

One day in the mid-1990s, a handful of executives from the Pulitzer Publishing Corporation sorted themselves into teams, sprawled out on a hotel room floor, and started playing with Legos. The conceit was to show how building something small—from a couple dozen Legos, for instance—could provide lessons on how to build something big, like a newspaper.

Running the team exercise was Bill Boggs, a managing partner of Synectics, Inc., a management consulting firm, who had been hired to overhaul Pulitzer. In the classic manner of '90s rebellious entrepreneurialism, Boggs was "a cigar-smoking, earring-wearing former Marine and onetime Methodist minister with a PhD in philosophy," who dismissed the term "consultant." As Alicia C. Shepard wrote for *American Journalism Review* in 1996, Boggs's mission was to reinvent the organization. "We facilitate innovation and change for our client organizations," he insisted, as if the distinction could be made meaningful.

Today, the lessons of the Lego exercise—"functioning in teams; problem-solving in a new medium; building with limited resources; thinking unconventionally," Shepard wrote, channeling consultant-speak—have suffused financially depleted newsrooms, which are producing more than ever, 24 hours a day, with fewer people. The internet, which destroyed the business model of the mass newspaper, has pushed the production of news, geographically uneven and generally impoverished, to a pace that would have been inconceivable to previous generations.

Boggs was one of an increasing number of "consultants" stalking newsrooms who represented a new era of hyper-management. The golden age of '70s investigative reporting was over, the internet was just beginning to shape the way journalists reported and distributed their work, and the newsroom itself was being primed—once again—for the rule of profit. The developments we see today feel as implacable as a natural disaster, on the order of rising sea levels combined with rapid erosion, sapping the foundations of once-prosperous coastal houses. Not all aspects of this disaster were predictable. But it may not have been wise to settle so close to shore.

How did we get here? Watch any '70s journalism film or read any book from the era, and the amount of time people appear to spend doing close to nothing seems unbelievable. In the film version of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's *All the President's Men*, the dynamic duo, having spent two weeks knocking on the doors of nearly every member of the Committee to Re-Elect the President without landing a single productive conversation, get lightly chastised by their editor. For the dwindling number of reporters forced to file relentless digital updates, such a scene must seem an unendurable luxury.

The recent Spielberg retread, *The Post*, saturated with nostalgia, dilates the woozy appeal of pre-digital slowness. We watch journalists

By the end of the day, the sub-editor has processed 110,000 words, the equivalent of a 200-page book.

sift hurriedly but methodically through uncollated piles of the Pentagon Papers, and when the presses spring into action, the type must be painstakingly set by actual humans. In *The Post*, newspapers are vaster than empires, and slower. If a story seems thin, it simply does not run. Legal niceties are discussed assiduously. Any time pressure or need to produce seems not to exist, except in the exaggerated, mythic contest of beating *The New York Times* to the story. This was also, and not coincidentally, the period we look back to as the era of the hero reporter (invariably white and masculine)—typified by Woodward and Bernstein, but also Neil Sheehan, Seymour Hersh, and reporter and media critic Ben Bagdikian, who secured the Pentagon Papers from Daniel Ellsberg to publish in *The Washington Post*.

Some say the current era is a backlash against that heroism. Newspaper executives and owners got sick of uppity, professionalized reporters, goes the theory, and they changed newsrooms and the production of news to put them in line. As told by Doug Underwood in his 1993 book *When MBAs Rule the Newsrooms*, the late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the birth of the hyper-managed newsroom, during which time the entire operation of a newspaper became subject to scientific forms of management. If early 1970s newspaper reporters had license to snoop and dawdle, those of the 1980s worked under a stricter order, shaped by new technologies, while newspapers' supporting staff—typesetters, copy editors, designers—had to adapt to computerization, and some were automated out of existence.

Over time, computerization and consultancies swept the newsroom, eliminating editing and layout by hand. Legions of workers, many of them doing what was traditionally "women's work"—typists, copy editors, administrative assistants ("secretaries")—were vaporized into the ether of Visual Display Terminals, just as increasing numbers of women entered higher echelons of newspaper work. As in other industries—design, biology, academia—pay stagnated for women entering the field as reporters, even though they were doing the same work as men before them. Of course, many male-dominated roles—typesetters and compositors—were eliminated as well, after years of strikes. The result of all these consultants and computers was that between 1975 and 1990, corporate newspaper chains reduced their production costs by 50 percent, nearly a decade and a half before the widespread adoption of broadband internet.

Internal technological changes reflected changes in ownership and outlook at the top. Though it is difficult to track, the practice of bringing in outside consultants to change newsrooms had become commonplace by the '80s. In addition to conducting research on readership, they transformed relationships between editors and reporters by making it more common in newspapers to attempt to measure reporters' productivity. A 1981 survey of the American Newspaper Publishers Association showed that performance

evaluations had become increasingly important to the industry. Corporate concentration tightened. Mergers brought more papers into fewer, if larger, hands: Chains owned 30 percent of dailies in 1960; by the mid-1990s, they owned 75 percent. Newspaper executives of that era also started going to business school, where they learned the latest fads, like consumer targeting: In the words of one communications company executive in 1980, newspapers needed to help "the new value-consumer seek self-fulfillment." Editors tried being circulation managers; pages were redesigned to accommodate fewer words and more graphics.

In his 1971 book *The Information Machines*, Bagdikian, then working for the RAND Corporation (where he met Ellsberg), describes a research panel that assayed some futurological understandings of how technology would affect the demands placed on newspapers:

> "In the future, news, once written, will enter the newsroom in faster ways.... The panel sees editors in different parts of their buildings, or even in different cities, working at consoles like high-quality television screens, on which they can call up stories, and, discussing them in voice conferences, making changes of material on the screen. When a decision is made on the final version of the story, and the alterations are made on the screen, it is re-entered into the computer."

He describes the effect of technology on the delivery of news to the consumer:

> "In the 1980s the consumer seeing the lists or pictures of items on his television screen may be able to make selections by telephone. In the late 1990s, he might be able to select them by simply placing an electronic pen or even his bare finger on the point of the TV screen where the desired item is shown."

"Such a signal is possible now," he notes, "utilizing the energy added to the screen by the fingertip, but it is highly specialized and expensive." Though off here and there in concept and occasionally in the time of arrival, the accuracy of this prediction is astonishing, when most versions of futurology tended, and tend, to be bunk.

In a sense, the 1960s and 1970s are a parenthesis in the history of newsrooms. The efficiency craze introduced by management theorist Frederick Taylor and his acolytes in the early 20th century came to newspapers early. Scientific management made its impress felt in every aspect of the newsroom. Landmarks are hard to come by, but the evidence lies in the archives. In the early 20th century, a writer for the trade magazine *Editor & Publisher* noted that the American Newspaper Publishers Association forcibly standardized the newsroom. "Cyclonic attics with desks gerrymandered into disorderly clusters by sulphurous editors," they wrote, "were supplanted by modern city rooms as regimented as a real estate office." Hence the classic image of the newsroom filled with rows of desks, ruled by serried orthodoxy.

Under the presiding spirit of Taylorism, white-collar productivity—the holy grail of management theory—became highly sought after by newspaper executives. By the turn of the 20th century, many of these executives had ceased to be journalists who rose through the ranks and more closely resembled those in other industries: educated and moneyed. Though the goal of each executive was the same—increased production—the methods for securing it varied. In 1919, the managing editor of the *San Antonio Express* developed cost-accounting techniques for determining the output of each reporter. *The New York Herald* debuted a system by which a statistician would compare the results of other, competing papers, and produce a score; after the *Herald* ended in 1920, the *Herald Tribune* maintained the system. The proliferation of copy editors, in fact, derived from these management techniques, since they gave the production of news an analogous workflow to manufacturing—further justifying the assembly-line look of newsrooms. In the 1930s, *The New York Times* had the largest copy desk in the world: 14 for local, 11 for cable, and 12 for telegraph. (In 2017, the *Times*'s freestanding copy desk was eliminated.)

By the postwar era, this version of the mechanized newsroom was set. And the form of the typical newsroom survived well into the digital era, when experiments in office

design offered other possibilities. This was partly because daily news production seemed to necessitate open offices, with the relatively straightforward series of steps that each story took: Reporters handed their copy to editors, who handed corrected copy to compositors, who input stories into Linotype machines (after the 1950s, it became common to feed stories punched onto tape into Linotype), who handed leaden versions of copy to proofreaders, before clean type was outfitted into a metal page frame, over which hot lead was poured to create a stereotype, and the stereotype was put into a rotary press, which would produce the newspaper.

The classical era of news production, in all its glory and with all its constraints, is best illustrated, as Bagdikian demonstrated in *The Information Machines*, with wire services. Teletype machines received and emitted wire news, but were limited to producing a certain number of words per hour. In RAND's study of one local newsroom, the words received on one teletype machine generally ran somewhere between 2,500 and 3,500 words per hour. But of course, with multiple machines, running all night, the amount of words actually received by any newsroom was enormous. Bagdikian describes the day of one suburban newspaper, where a sub-editor—whose job is to check copy for readability—arrives at 7am to find 50,000 words in the teletype. While he goes through the wires, he has to make a dummy of page one. He gets press releases at 8:30, and then a second batch thereafter. At 10am, he draws up a new page one. At 11:30 he redraws it, moving a page-one story to the inside. At 11:40 he discovers he has miscalculated on available space: There is more of it than he realized, and he includes more

MY CAREER PATH

Mary Norris

Copy editor at *The New Yorker* for more than 30 years, author

- Tried and failed to be a waitress twice, and was fired from both jobs after two days and two weeks, respectively.
- After college, worked for a costume company and then **drove a milk truck, the "best job I ever had."**
- Landed an entry-level position at *The New Yorker* in its editorial library and steadily moved up the ranks, working at the magazine on and off for more than 30 years.

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

Newspapers have always pleaded poverty, especially to justify savage personnel decisions.

stories that he rejected earlier. At noon, the city editor comes by and shows him a competing paper's version of his own story that he likes, and he tries a new headline. At 12:15, the sub-editor junks the story, because he finds a wire version that he likes better; this requires changing metal plates for page one, which he had already cast. By the end of the day, he has processed 110,000 words, the equivalent of a 200-page book.

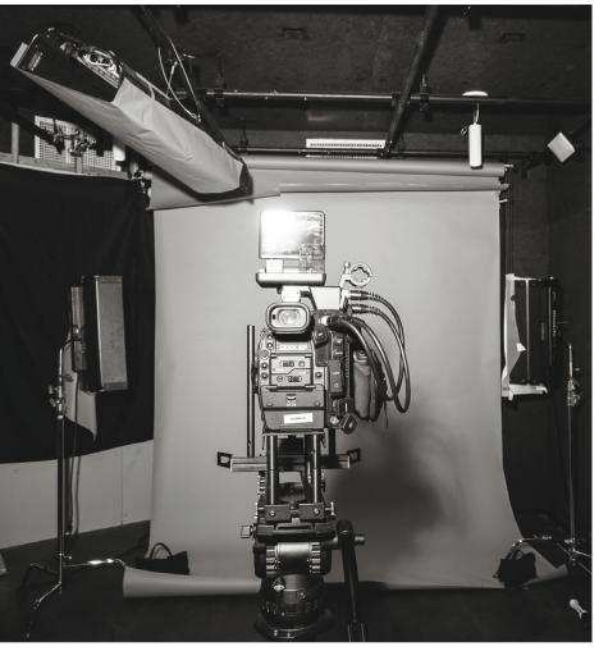
The pressures and size of the operation increase dramatically, of course. In an urban afternoon paper also studied by RAND around the same time, there were 22 teletype machines, operating 24 hours a day, producing 2,500 different news items that make up 400,000 words (not including sports and financial news). The thumbs-up or -down decision on the 2,500 wire stories is made by three men; every wire story is handed to another reporter or rewriter (usually a man); 90 percent of the stories are discarded. Each editor in the RAND study takes an average of one to two seconds to determine whether to use or junk a story, and most of the stories are junked.

When computers came on the scene, it was already a space with strong propensities toward rationalizing and calculating output, even though for a time in the 1960s and '70s, reporting had become partly exempt. After the computerization wave, that exemption was no longer. In *When MBAs Rule Newsrooms*, Underwood notes that some newspapers used computers to monitor the productivity of workers in their classified and circulation departments, and that computers could be used to determine "the number of stories produced by a reporter, the number of column inches, and the placement in the newspaper."

The demise of print advertising, associated with the rise of the internet, has routinely been blamed for the hollowing out of newspaper budgets. But the stage was set long before. Profit motives have ruled the newspaper business since newspapers were a business, and labor is inevitably the largest drag on margins.

Even the turn-of-the-century muckrakers—Ida Tarbell and the rest, who lent reporters new power and prestige—were not able to excoriate big business for long. The rise of scientific management, in manufacturing and newsrooms alike, came about so as to strip control of the labor process from workers—including arrogant reporters. Will Irwin, writing in the classic muckraking magazine *Collier's* in 1911, produced a 15-part series that laid the blame for the decline of this style of journalism with the advertising system and newspaper publishers, who shifted editorial control away from editors to corporate boards.

The golden years of the 1970s appear to have prompted a more direct reaction. In Underwood's telling, newsrooms had filled with reporters, many of them fresh from journalism programs, who possessed a strong sense of professional and ethical obligation. These



same reporters became known, some of them household names, for their coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention, the Vietnam War, and Watergate. The industry suddenly began to seem like a creative one: a vehicle for exceptionally talented people to hold other, more powerful people to account. Newsrooms had become professionalized and many had become unionized.

As with the muckrakers, newspaper executives eventually reacted against the romantic generation of investigative reporters. In a speech to the American Society of News Editors in 1982, Michael J. O'Neill, the former editor of the New York *Daily News*, lamented the press's "harshly adversarial posture toward government and its infatuation with investigative reporting," which, he felt, had partly led to "disarray in government," perhaps alluding to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. The response in the Reagan era appeared to be to divert focus from uncovering corruption, malfeasance, and criminality, among corporate and governing classes, and instead focus on the booming world of American business. The 1980s saw a sudden expansion of newspaper business sections. Few of these employed investigative reporting. Writing in 1983, the nearly indefatigable Bagdikian noted that only six out of the then–1,100 members of the organization Investigative Reporters and Editors covered business. This was partly because, by the end of the decade, more executives had been to business school, and perhaps didn't feel business needed to be investigated. Underwood noted that executives of *The Seattle Times*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Miami Herald*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and Knight Ridder had MBAs or had been through business programs.

To eliminate workers through technological means—to replace living labor with lifeless screens—would satisfy the imperatives of papers, their owners, and their owners' investors. As Bagdikian wrote in a subsequent essay, "The Myth of Newspaper Poverty" (1973): "American publishers have always felt obligated to pretend that they are an auxiliary of the [Catholic charity] Little Sisters of the Poor. This was always amusing, but now that so many papers are owned by publicly traded companies which have to disclose their finances it is taking on the air of slapstick."

Newspapers have always pleaded poverty, especially to justify savage personnel decisions. According to James Squires, former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, newspaper profits increased as much as circulation declined from 1969 to 1989. These were the same years newsworkers were being shed in the thousands. In fact, Squires pointed out, it made business sense to lose circulation among less wealthy readers to concentrate on those with money, in order to justify selling better ads.

The business-ification of American newspapers prepared the way for the current newsroom, in which an entirely new workflow has developed, and the chain of command has interposed a new class of workers between reporters and the reported product. What were otherwise unspoken nostrums about the mission of the press became pithless slogans emblazoned over the top of stricken papers (See: "Democracy dies in darkness"). But it is a defensiveness absent from the era *The Post* depicted, only arising later, as newspaper executives continually cried wolf, laying the groundwork for a pro-business, worker-lite model of newspapers. And in the 2000s the wolf finally came. CJR

What journalists sell when they take an exit package

The Bought-Out

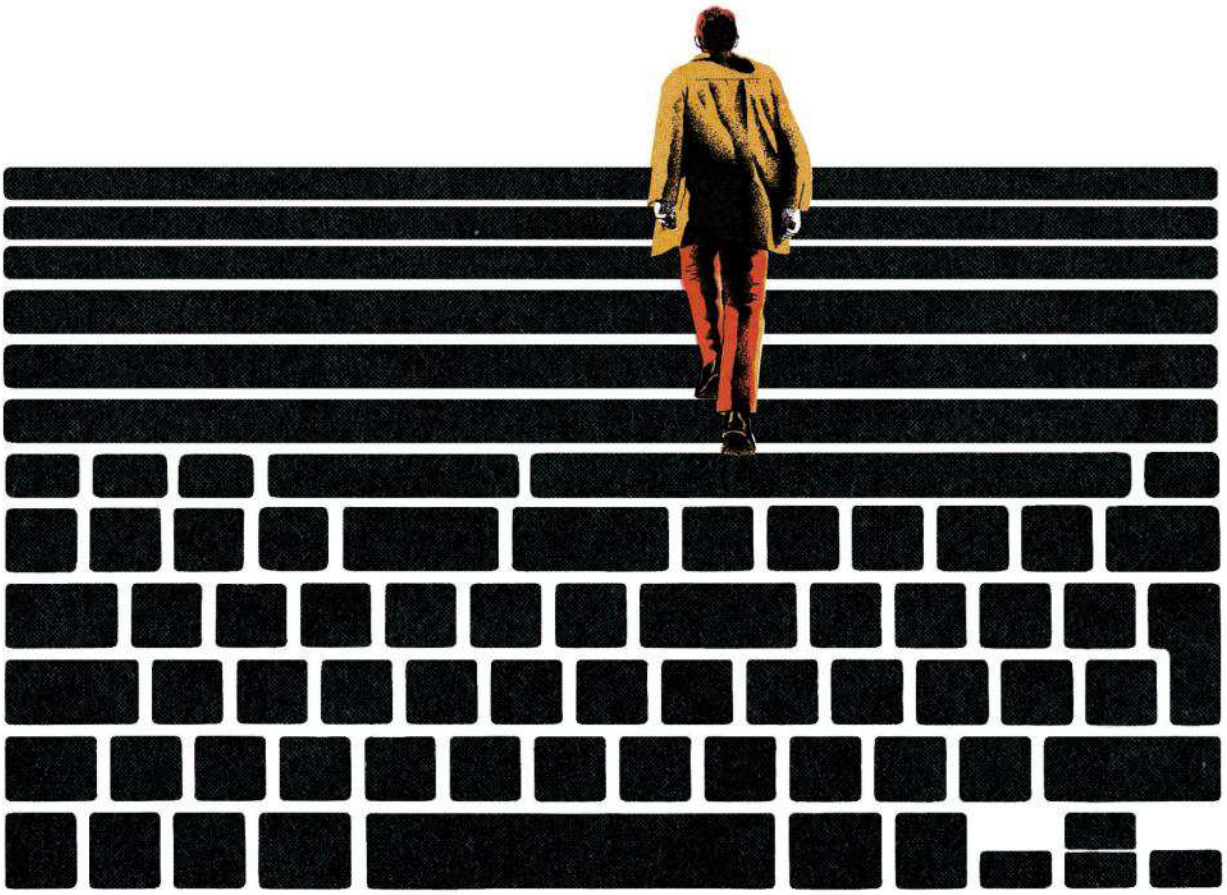
AUTHOR
Monica Potts

ILLUSTRATOR
Sonia Pulido

Peter Corbett loved journalism. After working at weeklies around Arizona for seven years, he worked 23 more at *The Arizona Republic*. "There are so many different things you get to do," he says. "You get in everybody's business, learn a hell of a lot. It's like constant graduate school. You meet great people, have an impact on your community, and work with really fun people." The *Republic* was, and still is, a dominant regional paper, and Corbett had planned to end his career there. With two grown kids in the area, he didn't want to move, and there were no other comparable outlets nearby.

He admits to being naive about the state of the industry for a long time. When he covered real estate for the paper in 2011 and 2012, he thought, "I'm glad I'm not in real estate." Even as the newsroom began shedding staff through what seemed like yearly buyouts and layoffs, he thought he would make it until 2020, when he'd be ready to retire. "I can ride this out," he told himself. Then, the company that owned his paper, Gannett, began targeting certain positions, including his as a reporter in a suburban bureau, for buyout offers. He passed these up a few times, but his confidence in his job security waned. "I felt, constantly, one of these days my number is going to come up," he says.

He was 60, covering City Hall in Glendale, Arizona. And the 2015 buyout offer was more generous than previous ones. The deadline to accept was in October, and with Corbett's years of service, he calculated the money would last him through mid-June 2016: about six



months. "I figured, I can find something after that much time," he says. Corbett was one of about 40 employees invited to take a buyout in that round; around half took it. "There was no guarantee that I wasn't going to get cut loose a year or two later," he says. He had turned a corner and decided his time had come.

Teresa Mears made a similar calculation when she decided to leave *The Miami Herald* in 2008. Her job was editing the home section, but she didn't see how it would survive as cost-cutting hit the paper. It seemed like the local, inside sections would be the first to go, and indeed, the section no longer exists. Even if she stayed and moved to another section, she thought, the job would become something different, with less of the kind of autonomy she'd enjoyed. "That was part of the reason I decided to take the buyout," she says. "I don't think we had a sense how bad it was going to get, [and] how quickly."

Mears doesn't remember the exact buyout figure, but she says it was between $20,000 and $25,000, which she thought would cover her expenses for about six months. She knew she would be taking a financial hit—and when the housing crisis reached Florida soon afterward, she lost her home—but she decided to take a step back and stop worrying about her finances. Her partner had died the previous year, and the time leading to her death had been difficult. "At this point in my life, maximizing my income is not a priority," she says. Mears had previously freelanced, making a living writing about Miami for the national sections of other big dailies, such as *The Boston Globe*. She thought those sources of income would dry up, too. She did some freelance editing for academic websites and journals, until she discovered a network of websites that gave tips about exploring cities on the cheap. She now runs the site about Miami, paid for by advertising. She makes less money today than she did at the paper.

In the 1990s, newspapers around the country were consolidating and expanding. Big city newspapers swallowed the smaller competitors, becoming regional behemoths with profit margins at an average of 15 percent, a rate unheard of in other industries. When the early '90s recession hurt local advertising sales, most observers viewed the dip as a small blip in the newspaper industry's otherwise inexorable growth.

To deal with bloated staffs created by the mergers, and to recover from the recession, newspapers around the country began offering buyouts. At the time, it seemed like a good way for workaday journalists to share in the wealth. At best, buyout money could be the seed funding for a writer's quaint bakery and café, or money to live off of while they worked out the novel kicking around in their head. At the very least, buyouts were a way to coax those ready to retire to do so earlier, saving money while keeping employees who wanted to stay on the job, rather than forcing people to leave through layoffs. Big buyouts were offered to the entire staffs of the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Baltimore Sun,* two papers then owned by the Times Mirror Company. David Simon took one and wrote his second book, *The Corner*, which, along with his first book, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*, formed the basis of one of the most celebrated HBO series of all time, *The Wire*. The buyout money helped transform him from a talented newspaper reporter into a television star. "Because of buyout offers," Elizabeth Chang wrote in 1993 for the *American Journalism Review*, "newspapers have lost top talent to competitors, lifestyle changes and fondly held, long-suppressed dreams."

That's still how I thought of buyouts in the mid-2000s, when, as a news assistant at *The New York Times*, I watched as the paper began to offer them. Not everyone who applied to take one would be approved: In the early days, there was competition for buyouts. A few superstars left in these first few rounds. Linda Greenhouse, a longtime Supreme Court reporter, left in 2008 and landed a lecturing gig at Yale Law School, as well as other writing opportunities. Another to leave that year was David Cay Johnston, who'd won a Pulitzer a few years earlier for his reporting on the IRS.

Johnston remembers Jill Abramson, then the paper's managing editor, telling him she assumed he would have all sorts of job offers. He recalls replying, "I'm sure I will." But he didn't want another job. Instead, he concentrated on his books and took a part-time gig as a columnist. "I very quickly increased my income by a third, while reducing my workload to 60 days a year," he says. His latest

Journalists are no longer taking buyouts to thrive, but to survive. Rather than seed funding for new opportunities, they're a last resort for people who want to leave on their own terms.

book, *It's Even Worse Than You Think*, released in January, was a bestseller.

A decade ago, buyouts still seemed rare and relatively novel. Everyone knew the internet—specifically, the rise of blogs and the low price of online advertising—was challenging the industry, but it still seemed like most media outlets would adapt, especially nationally recognized papers like the *Times*, or big regional papers that whole chunks of the country relied on, like *The Arizona Republic*.

Nicole Collins-Bronzan, a friend of mine at the *Times* who had been promoted to assistant metro editor, says it still seemed that way in 2009, when she applied to take a buyout during the paper's second big round of offers in two years. Her decision was mostly for personal reasons: She was ready to start a family, and the long hours spent working at the paper were increasingly out of step with what she wanted for her future. "It felt like a monumental thing," she says. "It was not the thing they were planning for me, and they were surprised when I took it. It meant so much more then. It was such a big deal. People took it very seriously."

That was when buyouts still looked like a choice, an offer workers could accept and use as a cushion to do something new and different. In the years since, buyouts have come to seem more like layoffs disguised by a kinder name, with workers accepting them primarily because they know a harsher elimination is likely in their future if they don't. Journalists are no longer taking buyouts to thrive, but to survive. Rather than offering real opportunity, they're a last resort for people who want to leave on their own terms, with as much advance notice as possible. Newspapers almost always seem to be announcing "another" round of buyouts, and each serves to remind those of us who care about the industry that it's still shrinking, leaving us to wonder what remains.

For newspapers, what began in 2008, the first full year of the Great Recession, exposed some fundamental weaknesses in what had once been considered a thriving industry: Readers were moving online, where content was mostly free; and advertisers would always pay less to reach those readers online than they had for the ads they'd paid for in physical newspapers. Whole categories of advertising, such as classifieds, would permanently disappear because of the rise of sites like Craigslist. Total newspaper advertising revenue was a little more than $48 billion in 2004. In 2008, it had fallen to just under $38 billion. By 2016, the total estimated revenue hovered around $18 billion.

The numerical decline of the industry's workforce has been just as devastating. In 2008, during that first big round of buyouts at the *Times*, newspapers employed 65,720, according to the Pew Research Center, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. By 2015, the most recent year available, the total employment in the industry was down by more than a third, to 41,400. In the years between, large-scale layoffs and buyouts at big papers became annual events, and few saw much of a bright side. When Bill Keller, then executive editor at the *Times*, announced

MY CAREER PATH

Lydia Polgreen

Editor in chief of HuffPost

- **First job was at 14, working at a taco place named Taco John's,** with memorable Mexican-spiced tater tots.
- After college, took an unpaid editorial internship at *Washington Monthly* and waitressed at night at a Malaysian restaurant.
- Took a "very traditional" path, moving from small to large papers and eventually to *The New York Times* in 2002. Left to helm HuffPost in December 2016.

the possibility of layoffs at a staff meeting in late 2009, following a round of furloughs and budget cuts, he said: "The idea that you can do 'more with less' is, in my view, one of the four great lies.... What you can do with less, is less. But if you are smart and careful, you can limit the harm."

One way the *Times* and other papers have tried to limit the harm is to nudge workers who are at the end of their careers—close to retirement age and likely to stay only a few more years anyway—out a little sooner with targeted buyout offers. Discrimination of workers over the age of 40 is against federal law, but when the offer is voluntary, some jump at the chance for an early retirement. Mark Hertzberg, a former staff photographer at *The Journal Times* in Racine, Wisconsin, tells me he was offered a buyout in 2012 when his editor asked him to stay behind after a news meeting. The editor told him the photo department was going to be scaled back. "If I stayed, one of the other two photographers would be laid off. They had young children," he says. "Without hesitation, I said, 'I'll take a buyout.'" He was 61 then, and working on finishing a book of photography. He'd had a heart attack about five months earlier. It seemed like a good time to scale back.

After Corbett took a gamble on the buyout at *The Arizona Republic*, he wasn't ready to retire, so he started a travel blog called On the Road Arizona, for which he takes his own pictures and champions the state's byways. He also got a job at the Arizona Department of Transportation, where he works with other former journalists to publish information about the state of the roads, traffic accidents, and other such information online. "My boss is a former [Associated Press] reporter in New York, so we're simpatico," he says. "He obviously likes hiring newspaper people for these jobs, because he knows they can do the work under pressure."

Many of those who have taken buyouts point out that when newspapers lose their more experienced workers, they also lose institutional memory. It is a vague, somewhat sentimental idea, but people with years of experience just hold a lot of knowledge that less-experienced people haven't yet acquired. Journalists are romantics, and this idea can disturb them every time a round of buyouts comes up: How will the young reporters learn without a grizzled, grumpy editor to teach them?

But newspapers are losing people at earlier stages of their careers, too. *The Orange County Register* is a local paper based in Anaheim, California, which competes with the *Los Angeles Times* in local coverage and has a history that spans more than a century and includes three Pulitzer Prizes. Jill Reed found herself at the *Register* after taking an irregular route to journalism. She had been an accountant in her early 20s but decided she wanted a more exciting job, so she enrolled in college again to study photography and photojournalism. She started an

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

internship before she graduated at the *Daily Breeze*, a small local paper in Torrance, California, where she lived, and during the eight years she worked there, she was a photo editor, food columnist, and copy editor. Whenever she went on vacation, she took her camera along to work on something for the travel section. "I loved the look and feel of the paper," she says. She also loved the energy. "In journalism, you never know what you're going to get on a daily basis," she says. "Sometimes you get that little adrenaline rush when something happens, and you completely have to do a 180 and change plans." She thought journalism would be her life's career.

Reed was part of an ecosystem that existed then, of working at a small newspaper and getting a lot of experience, then moving to bigger and bigger papers. In 2006, after an old boss from the *Breeze* moved to the *Register*, she hired Reed for a job on the spot during an interview. The end goal for a lot of journalists in that region then was the *LA Times*, but the *Register* promised its own glories. "I was told of bonuses and pay raises and opportunities," she says. "None of that panned out. Instead we got buyouts and layoffs."

The *Register* didn't have union representation, and so, when it began offering buyouts and layoffs on a regular basis in 2008, it was never entirely clear who was being targeted and why. Early on, folks left because they wanted a career change, or no longer liked the decisions the paper was making—focusing on slideshows and graphics instead of local government coverage, chasing eyeballs for meager advertising dollars.

Reed remembers surviving three major rounds of layoffs and two or three smaller ones. The boss who had hired her was laid off. Another coworker from the *Breeze* who'd also come to the *Register* was as well. By 2014, Reed was working as a weekend photo editor and had seen the photo desk shrink. She was saying goodbye to colleagues on a regular basis. She no longer had the staff or freelancing budget to cover all she would have in the past. "There were a lot of times I had to say no to people. We didn't have the resources and staff to cover this, this, and this," she says. The severance package offered that year, based on length of tenure, would provide her with about five months of pay for her eight years of work. "It seemed like, this was the point where it's not going to get any better. They were never going to offer this package again."

Reed, who is now 46, knew she was leaving journalism. Her son was starting school, and she thought she'd look for work in communications, closer to Torrance, where she still lived. Her husband was supportive. Within a few months, before her severance pay had run out, she landed a job in the communications department for the City of Torrance—at first temping for someone who was on maternity leave. They made her position permanent to keep her. "It's not as exciting as being day-to-day on the news desk," she says. "I'm at a point where I don't need that so much any more."

Journalism isn't just exciting for the people who practice it. It's also a civic mission—those who enter the profession take their role as public servants and government watchdogs seriously. For people who've left journalism, the message the continued buyouts and layoffs send is that the businesses that run the papers and the readers who rely on them don't realize how important those functions are—and won't until they're gone.

The *Los Angeles Times* won a Pulitzer in 2011 for uncovering corruption in the small, working-class city of Bell, California, where a city manager was paid as much as $800,000, and the entire city council was paying itself double and triple what counterparts in other cities made. Under the radar, and away from press attention, the officials were raiding the city treasury. It's hard to imagine that happening in a previous era, when one or two journalists would have attended nearly every city council meeting. "The problem in American journalism is not investigative reporting," says Johnston, who worked at the *LA Times* before going to New York. "It's beat reporting. There are city councils and school boards and county legislatures or boards of supervisors that rarely see a journalist." Covering city hall in a suburban bureau is exactly the kind of job Corbett used to do, and loved. Now, fewer and fewer people do it, and even the most generous buyouts can't mask what's been lost. CJR

Help Wanted

We asked hiring editors what they need

Edith Chapin

Executive Editor, NPR News

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

We look for people at all levels of experience, so it is hard to generalize beyond people who are tenaciously curious and quick studies. Needless to say we look for reporters who **have sources**, but who are good storytellers and good communicators with the ability to adapt to **multiple platforms**. We look for people who are diggers, who go the extra steps to get the context and delve beyond the surface and the obvious. Specifically, language skills and/or **data reporting** skills enhance narrative skills.

Katie Drummond

Executive Editor, The Outline

✶ ✶ **AUDIO** ✶ **REPORTING** ✶ ✶

Two skills stand out to us in the hiring process right now. The first is audio. Podcasts and audio storytelling are everywhere, including at The Outline, so anyone with experience in radio or podcasts, or enthusiasm for the medium, is extra interesting right now. The second is reporting. It sounds obvious, but the ability and desire to pick up the phone or take the meeting are increasingly rare in online media. We don't want writers who can churn out five posts a day, but we do want people who can make a few phone calls and turn around one reported piece.

Shani O. Hilton

Vice President of News and Programming, BuzzFeed News

BuzzFeed News is interested in reporters who are eager to unearth stories that otherwise may never have come to light, whether that be a caravan of migrants heading through Mexico toward our southern border, or suspicious deaths in the US and UK linked to Russia. We look for tenacious and enthusiastic reporters with good news judgement who can own a beat and break news, whether that be through shoe-leather reporting, or understanding social and how conversations are developing and spreading on those platforms.

Bill Keller

Editor in Chief, The Marshall Project

It seems to me the practical skills you want depend on the job. In the past year we've hired an immigration reporter, a writer focused on a California project, an investigative reporter, a data reporter, a Web developer, a features editor, and a news editor. We're interviewing for a visual projects editor. (That's just the newsroom. The business side, if you can apply that term to a nonprofit, has also been hiring.) Each of those jobs comes with its own set of practical requirements. Fluency in Spanish was a major asset for the immigration job; interactive graphics experience was a big plus for the Web development job; the ability to guide a reporter through a long-form narrative was essential for the features editor. Also, some skills are essential but are not hard to teach. I want reporters to be comfortable filing FOIAs, for example, but a good reporter can learn that, especially working alongside our numerous FOIA-adept colleagues. (We run in-house workshops on FOIA and other skills.) It's much more important to me that a reporter be comfortable with complexity, good at seeing the story others are missing, rigorous about facts, and fair-minded.

Ben Smith

Editor in Chief, BuzzFeed

CURIOSITY
AGGRESSION
OBSESSIVENESS

I look primarily for timeless skills: **curiosity, aggression, obsessiveness.** I think this industry often overvalues technical skills, social media wit, and even just nice writing because they all make management's job easier. But at the heart of the news business are great reporters doing great reporting, and if someone wants to get scoops and scrawl them on napkins in crayon, that's okay with me.

LEARN CHINESE JAPANESE RUSSIAN ARABIC GERMAN

Stephen J. Adler

President and Editor in Chief, Reuters

First and foremost, we're looking for great reporters who have a passion for getting to the bottom of things and have the skills, creativity, and persistence to do so. Particular skills we seek include the ability to work in multiple media—video, photography, graphics, social media, data, and, of course, text. Strong writing is a big asset. For us, language skills are also important because of our global footprint and our need to report and deliver news in more than a dozen languages. (Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, and German are especially prized right now.) Finally, and crucially, a successful candidate has to be committed to upholding the Reuters Trust Principles of "integrity, independence, and freedom from bias." That means reporting with speed but not haste; striving for accuracy but always correcting mistakes; and putting one's personal opinions aside in the interest of impartial journalism.

Marty Baron

Executive Editor, *The Washington Post*

We look for people who will be both **learners and teachers**: learners in the sense that they're always trying to get better and become more informed; teachers in the sense that they can teach us something important we don't already know. We look for a collaborative spirit, given that today's journalism requires drawing on many colleagues' skills to tell stories in pioneering ways. Good ideas are essential. So, we want evidence that job candidates will bring them, and then take the initiative to develop them.

Jenna Weiss-Berman

Co-founder, Pineapple Street Media

When looking for audio producers, I used to think that technical proficiency was the most important qualification. But over the years I've realized that while technical editing skills can be taught, the ability to build a great story can't really be taught. You kind of either know how to tell a story or you don't! So when we interview people, we're looking for a good sense of humor, emotional intelligence, someone who can tell an engaging story. And we want diverse and interesting personalities so that we can make diverse and interesting content.

Deborah Clark

Senior Vice President and General Manager, *Marketplace*

Marketplace is going through a major transformation—which means a lot of hiring and a lot of change. The ideal candidates are excited about our vision—to raise the economic IQ of the country; they can both describe and execute the *Marketplace* approach to storytelling about the economy; and they are comfortable with a dynamic environment. And of course they must, must, must understand the importance of story first, platform second. If you still need to be sold on the importance of using the vast array of digital tools available to us as storytellers these days, *Marketplace* is not the right fit for you.

Megan Greenwell

Editor in Chief, Deadspin

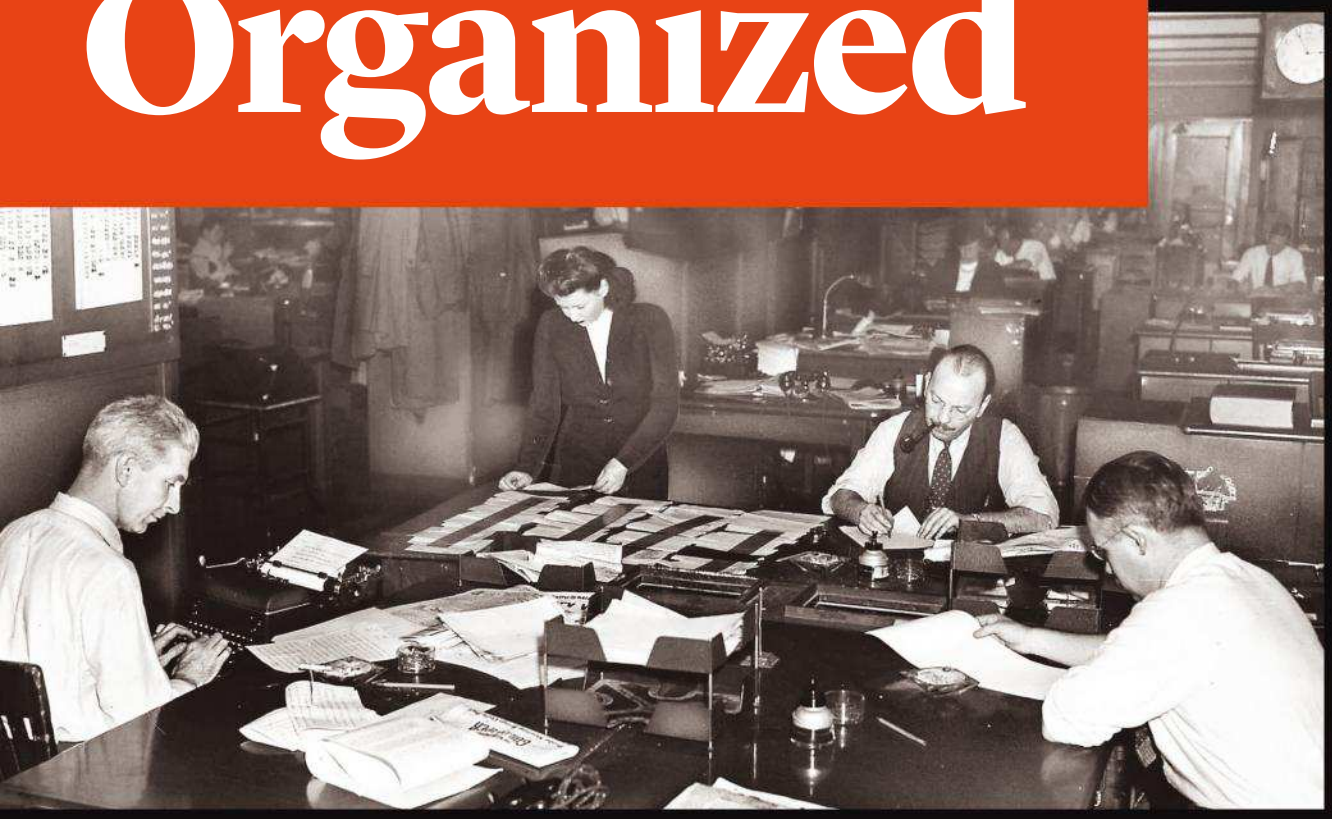
The most important skill I'm looking for, in both writers and editors, is the ability to come up with unique stories and angles—whether it's developing a new way of looking at the news everyone is talking about, or finding a story no one else has noticed. That can come with experience, of course, but it's yet another reason to prioritize diversity in hiring: I need people who read publications I don't read, who come from backgrounds I don't come from, and who think in ways I don't think.

Samhita Mukhopadhyay

Executive Editor, Teen Vogue

The number-one quality I look for in an applicant is curiosity—do they have an inquisitive mind, and will they research and investigate the issues they are interested in? Will they always be motivated to pursue their interests, not because I am asking but because there is a spark lit that makes them want to know more? The second thing I look for is creativity: I want to know that they will ask the right questions when faced with the news and will have something unique to add to the conversation. I can teach you how to edit, write, or make sure to have the right Google alerts—what I can't teach you is how to be creative. And the last thing I look for is hustle—will this person do what it takes to get the job done? This industry is not a 9-to-5 job, it is about being passionate about the issues you care about and pursuing them until you find what you need. **CJR**

Getting Organized



GETTING ORGANIZED

I. Joining the Ranks

What's driving the new wave of unionization sweeping digital newsrooms?

AUTHOR
Anna Heyward

PHOTOGRAPHER
William Mebane

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN
(Previous spread, clockwise from top left) Mic's Scott Fersht, Jessica Jimenez, Marc Paskin, and Evan Ross Katz prepare for a shoot; *Guild Daily* reporters knock out stories for the next day's paper (Courtesy NewsGuild); Mic's Ernesto Arrocha and Kengo Tsutsumi work with a view; reporters work in the New York *Daily News* city room (Courtesy NewsGuild).

(Opposite) Esther Gim (left) and Kelsey Sutton, who has since left, work from Mic's World Trade Center office.

After he graduated from Yale in 2007, Russell Brandom, now 33 years old, got a job at the men's lifestyle email newsletter UrbanDaddy. He worked there for five years, by which time, he tells me, he was "going a little crazy." He had grown bored writing about standing desks, tailored jackets, and men's grooming, and realized he was doing nothing to "burnish my credentials as a journalist." But the journalism job market being what it was in 2012, he'd found it difficult getting hired to a position for which he was more enthusiastic.

So, at age 27, Brandom took an internship at BuzzFeed. When it ended six months later, he was told there were no open positions at the company, but his clips helped him, later that year, secure a job offer from The Verge, Vox Media's technology site, as a reporter making $45,000 a year. He mainly covered tech news, but had some freedom to write quirkier stories, such as one about a bot that bought things at random from Amazon, and another on rubber fingertips that could fool fingerprint readers on smartphones. There was no formal process for pay increases, so each year, he would go to his supervisor, show what he'd done, and ask for a raise.

By June 2017, Brandom was earning $60,000 and on the cusp of a promotion to senior reporter (which would boost his pay to $70,000) when a coworker DM'ed about a secret meeting about Vox unionizing at the headquarters of the Writers Guild of America East (WGAE), on Hudson Street in Lower Manhattan. Brandom was skeptical. Like most of his colleagues, he'd never been a member of a union. He'd watched Gawker, which had just filed for bankruptcy after losing a $140 million privacy and defamation case against Hulk Hogan, and other digital media outlets unionize with the WGAE over recent years,

and he thought, *Well, they went through all this process and what did they really get?*

He went to the meeting anyway. Sitting around a table, WGAE staff introduced themselves, and then invited the Vox employees to do the same and explain why they wanted to unionize. Instead of vague or ideological reasons, Brandom heard "very concrete and specific and serious concerns they want to address."

Just a few years earlier, it might have been hard to imagine such a meeting taking place. In a January 2015 piece called "Why Internet Journalists Don't Organize," *Washington Post* business reporter Lydia DePillis wrote that a "generation of younger workers less familiar with unions who've built personal brands that they can transfer to other media companies" weren't interested in making lasting relationships with employers—or the unions associated with them. "Web publications are seen as springboards to something better, so writers are willing to put in long hours for low pay until they're poached by some other place, which is the only way to get a raise, anyway."

The week after the Vox unionization meeting, HuffPost laid off 39 employees, which caught Brandom's attention. The job cuts were part of a wave of layoffs that hit digital media companies during the short-lived "pivot to video." By the end of 2017, Time Inc. had dismissed 300 people, 60 were laid off at Vice, 25 people were let go the next month at Mic, 50 jobs were cut at Mashable, and there were 100 layoffs each at BuzzFeed and Condé Nast. Few of those workplaces were unionized at the time, but HuffPost was represented by the WGAE, which put out a statement: "The unit members who have been laid off will receive a collectively-bargained severance package that includes two months' salary plus a week of pay for each year of service and continued health benefits (medical, prescription, drug, dental and vision) for that entire period." Brandom decided, *Okay, we're doing this*.

The NewsGuild of New York, part of the Communication Workers of America, is the oldest and most established union for journalists in the country. Founded as the Newspaper Guild in 1933, it organized at places where it was common for journalists' careers to span multiple decades: *The New York Times*, Thomson Reuters, Time Inc., *The Washington Post*. Though it adopted the new name of the NewsGuild in 2015 to reflect the increasingly paperless nature of

its industry, the union at that point had made little progress toward organizing digital news outlets. The first Web publication to organize with the union was Truthout, a nonprofit progressive news site that had itself sought out the union in 2009. The Daily Beast, owned by internet conglomerate IAC, was inherited by the NewsGuild in 2011 when it merged with *Newsweek*, whose staff had been represented by the union since it was owned by the Washington Post Co. When *Newsweek* was sold to IBT Media in 2013, the Daily Beast staff got their own separate contract with the NewsGuild. Some attempts to unionize digital publications had been unsuccessful: Efforts at Vice and Salon were fruitless and Mike Elk, a labor reporter at Politico, set out to organize his newsroom in late 2014 but had trouble getting his colleagues to show up to meetings—before leaving the company by the summer of 2015 to become a freelance reporter.

According to labor jurisdiction conventions at that time, the NewsGuild would have been the default union for a digital media company like Gawker Media, where Hamilton Nolan had been a writer since 2008 covering labor and the aftereffects of the recession. Occasionally, someone would ask in the comments on his stories, "Why isn't Gawker unionized?" To the best of his knowledge, no union had ever reached out to Gawker Media employees, he says, "despite our having been a highly visible independent media company for a decade." And besides, Nolan tells me, "I thought it was more for Walmart workers, people in worse situations than us. We weren't really being exploited."

Split into two branches, East and West, the Writers Guild of America has since 1951 represented writers primarily in entertainment fields: film, television, and radio. Prior to 2007, the WGA had no contract provisions for digitally distributed work, but sensing the increasing importance of online platforms, that year, during contract talks with the major film and TV studios, the WGA's 12,000 member writers went out on a high-profile, 14-week strike over residuals and payment for the distribution of work online. The deal that emerged changed the stakes for labor in "new media," by giving the Guild real jurisdiction over digital media for the first time. Ursula Lawrence, who is now a sitcom writer in Los Angeles, was hired by the WGAE in 2009 as part of its effort to organize digital companies. "We were all sort of wrapping our minds around what digital content was even going to include," she says. Vice Media, which had raised more than $500 million from investors that included entertainment companies like 20th Century Fox, Time Warner, Disney, and A&E Networks, looked like a promising target.

So when Lawrence contacted Nolan in early 2015, it wasn't to talk about Gawker but Vice Media, whose working conditions Nolan had been writing about. Lawrence had not found much enthusiasm for unionizing among the Vice employees she had contacted so far because of fears, she says, of management retaliation. Trying a different tactic, the WGAE hired a corporate research firm to make a report on Vice's finances and employment and then planned to leak the findings to Nolan, whose coverage they thought might help their cause. At one point during a meeting over drinks, Nolan asked Lawrence, "We're a media company, why don't you try to organize us?"

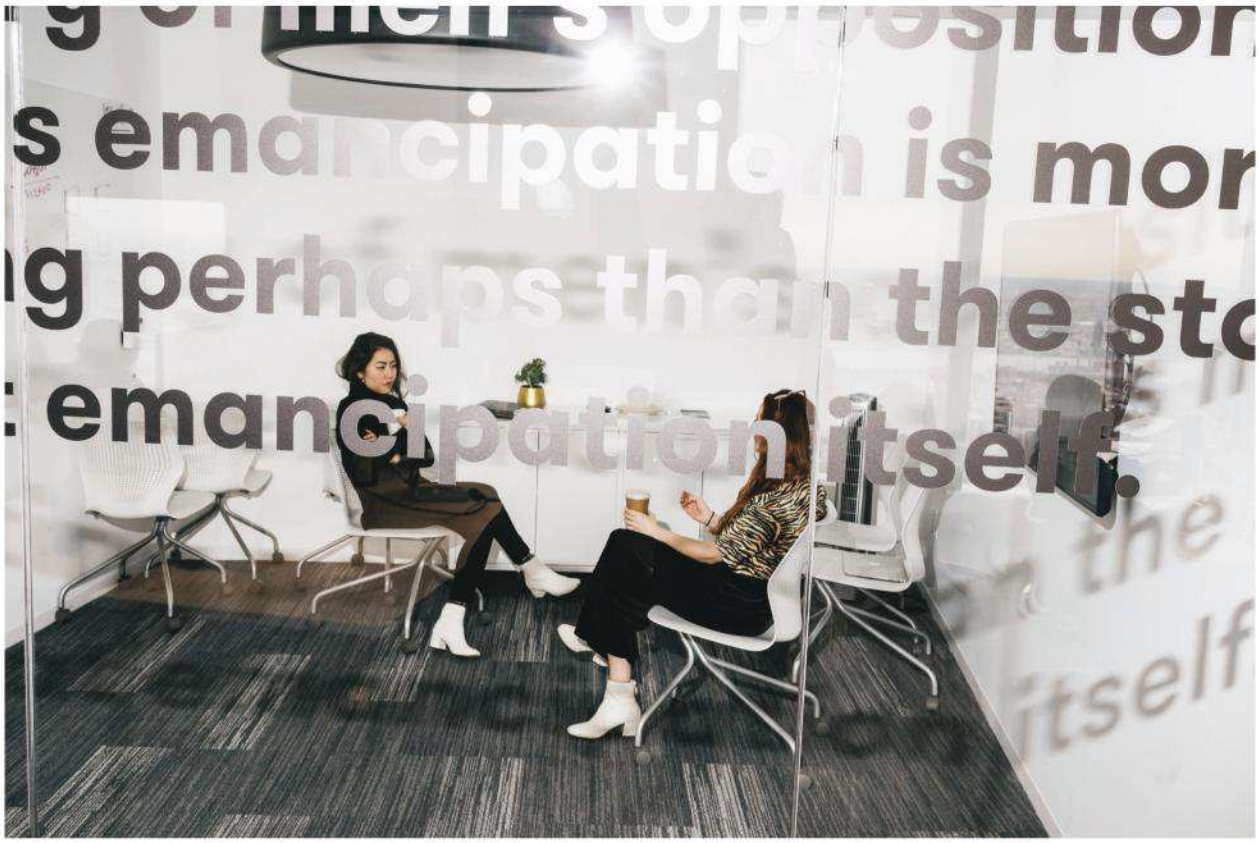
The WGAE's Gawker campaign was loud and bumpy from the beginning and broke with many union conventions. For one, there were concerns about treading into the NewsGuild's turf. Publicly, both unions downplay any rivalry, but over the course of my reporting for this article, staff from both organizations asked me several times about my contacts with the other. Lawrence says there were some discussions among WGAE staff "about whether or not we should be organizing something that may have previously fallen under another guild's jurisdiction."

A typical campaign often begins with the union identifying a workplace ripe for organizing, and then approaching the "target," sometimes through a neutral third party, such as a former colleague or friend, who brokers a meeting with a worker. An organizing committee is formed and the union begins gathering information about the workplace. All of this is usually done in secret, and during this period, the union rep relies heavily on the enthusiasm and skill of the pro-union worker with whom they made the first contact.

Then the members of the drive who are in closest contact with the union begin having

MEETING OF MINDS
(Top) Program Director Ramona Luo and Senior Producer Bethany O'Grady of Mic's Brand Newsroom.

NewsGuild's Chess Club meets at the 44th Street headquarters. Date unknown. (Courtesy NewsGuild)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one-on-one conversations with their co-workers. The union's organizer keeps track of staff sentiment on unionizing—who's a "yes," who's wavering, who's a "no"—generally with the goal of reaching a majority of employees, at which point the union might notify management and the campaign goes public.

There was no such stealth period for Gawker Media. Justin Molito, the WGAE's director of organizing, says, "There weren't a series of quiet meetings where trusted colleagues spoke about the union." The day after an early meeting with the WGAE in April 2015, Nolan wrote about the campaign on Gawker. A union election was announced in another Gawker post, under which employees began discussing how they planned to vote in the comments—a situation that Lawrence remembers as "a nightmare" for the union organizers.

Kevin Draper, then a writer for Deadspin, posted, "I am an avid proponent of unions, a leftist, and am perpetually distrustful of those in power—especially those that hold sway over my own employment, yet on June 3rd, I am going to vote against Gawker Media editorial staffers unionizing. That is how fucked up this entire process, from start to apparent finish, has been." Leslie Horn, then a writer for Gizmodo, commented, "Nothing about the road to organization has been organized in the least, so I'm not confident in the WGA's abilities to help us unionize." Some readers chimed in: "Sounds like what you really want is a competent HR department," wrote one who went by Towelie.

Still, 75 percent of staff voted "yes" in the election. It was, in some ways, a kind of coming of age of digital media, a sign that the freewheeling, improvisatory, quasi-amateur nature of young digital media companies had begun to wear thin. The upstart companies, run for the past decade on shoestring budgets that cut corners or found ways to reduce the costs of human labor by upending the established ways older news media organizations operate, had themselves grown into mature businesses.

The same day Gawker voted to join the WGAE, Lawrence says she got three phone calls from workers at other digital media outlets—one of them DNAinfo, which two years later was shut down by its billionaire founder, Joe Ricketts, one week after its staff voted to unionize with the WGAE. Within a few months, the WGAE had campaigns running at Vice as well as a number of other digital newsrooms: ThinkProgress, Salon, HuffPost, MTV News, Slate, The Intercept, and Vox Media. Meanwhile, in July 2015 the NewsGuild received a $500,000 grant from its parent union to organize digital media companies, and promptly announced the unionization of *The Guardian* US, followed by Al Jazeera

A Tale of Two Unions

A timeline of newsrooms that have joined the WGAE or the NewsGuild in recent years

2015

Gawker Media employees vote to join the WGAE. (Gawker management ratifies the contract in 2016, six months before most of the company is sold to Univision.) Staff at Salon Media announce their intention to unionize with the WGAE, which is recognized by management in early July.

Managers at *The Guardian* US recognize the NewsGuild. Al Jazeera America managers drop their opposition to union negotiations after a National Labor Relations Board–supervised election.

2016

Editorial staff at Vice and ThinkProgress ratify first union contracts with the WGAE. HuffPost voluntarily recognizes its employees' involvement with the WGAE, ratifying a contract in early 2017.

America (though it was shut down soon after); Mic; two previously non-union newspapers, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*; and *The New Republic*. Jack Smith IV, a writer at Mic who recently led that drive, tells me that organizing a workplace "is like converting people to a religion."

Perhaps one reason the Writers Guild catalyzed the recent surge of newsroom unionization is that employers of journalists in the 21st century look a lot less like the industrial behemoths of 20th century publishing and more like Hollywood's evanescent web of production companies and studios, which routinely form and disband whenever movies are greenlit or TV shows are canceled. Who gets hired and fired in show business is often governed by personal relationships, and the largely transient entertainment workers represented by the WGA and other guilds in Hollywood look to their unions to ensure that amidst industry turbulence certain employment terms are uniform from workplace to workplace.

For staffers at young digital media companies, the thing that once was thought to be a barrier to unionizing—their tendency to hop from employer to employer—has turned into a prime motivation to organize. One recently unionized employee tells me her last job was at an organization that no longer exists and she doesn't expect to stay at her current company for long, either. Still, she says, "I want a 9-to-5 job that I earn a decent salary from, [to] be able to save money, leave work when I'm not working, and not be working all the time." Nastaran Mohit, an organizer at the NewsGuild, says, "There's a perception that at legacy publications, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Reuters, AP"—all longtime NewsGuild members—"there's an inherent stability there. Looking at previously non-union digital publications, I think younger journalists recognize the instability and precarity of the industry, and they see the value of coming together to secure a seat at the table." As the WGAE's Molito puts it, "There hasn't been a campaign we've done in the last two years in digital media that didn't include somebody who had recently organized at a previous workplace. They know very well they may be working at another company in two weeks."

When the WGAE's union drive at Vox Media was announced on November 17, 2017, management initially had no stance, and did not know how to respond. That uncertainty motivated organizers to fill the void but, similar to what happened at Gawker, they knew it would be in public. Megan McRobert, who was hired by the WGAE in 2015 to work on the wave of new campaigns, says she had been trained to keep information about employees'

2017

Managers at The Intercept, MTV News, and Thrillist voluntarily recognize the WGAE, avoiding the need for a ballot. Later in the year, Gothamist and DNAinfo staffers vote to organize with the WGAE. But one week later, in early November, the titles are shuttered by billionaire owner Joe Ricketts, after his managers warned employees that a union might be "the final straw."

2018

Managers at Vox Media agree to bargain with the WGAE. Slate's editorial staff defies management by voting to unionize with the WGAE. And staffers at satirical site The Onion, which is owned by Univision, vote to unionize with the WGAE, calling on management to recognize the agreement.

Staff at the *LA Times* defy their owners, Tronc, when they vote to join the NewsGuild. Managers at Mic recognize the NewsGuild. Staffers at *The New Republic* vote to unionize with the NewsGuild. And campaigns to unionize gear up at the *Chicago Tribune* and Montana's Missoula *Independent*—the first journalists to launch one in the latter state.

voting and conversion to the union completely confidential. But at the drives she's worked on, including Vox and HuffPost, "they just didn't accept that. They were like, Look, this is our workplace. We want to have access to the information."

Soon after the Vox unionization was announced, a senior reporter at Vox.com, German Lopez, tweeted, "I am against #VoxUnion. I know writers who want a union as protection for laziness, which will make a lot of things worse (including for writers). I am generally fine with and even supportive of unions. Just not this one." He received more than 2,000 replies, sparking a media-wide discussion about the motivations for unionization, what union protection entails, and a lot of GIFs.

On December 13, Melissa Bell, publisher of Vox Media, and the member of management who served as point of contact for the union, sent an email to employees urging the consideration of a federal National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election over voluntary recognition by the company once a majority of employees had signed union membership cards. An often lengthy and legally cumbersome process, NLRB elections work by submitting the union petition to the federal agency, which then conducts a vote. Bell's note outraged some pro-union employees, who interpreted it as management opposition to their campaign. (Bell tells me that at the time she sent her email, "We were considering all the options; it's not that we were opposed to voluntary recognition.")

Less than a month after his first anti-union tweet, Lopez tweeted again, this time to say he'd signed a union card. "A supermajority of Vox's eligible staff (70+ percent) is asking for this, and management is stonewalling it. That led me to reconsider just how worker-friendly the company is." It was a shift many Vox staff went through: They were beginning to see their interests as employees as separate from those of management. As generally satisfied with workplace conditions as Vox workers are, one staffer tells me, "everything we have could change. We've seen it happen." The NewsGuild's Mohit explains it more prosaically: "You tend to realize your boss is not your friend."

A union, many hope, will be a bulwark against an ineffective HR department, or at least a reason for management to show a commitment to resolution. The drive at Vice discovered large salary disparities between workers doing similar jobs, particularly between men and women, and the company is now being sued for salary discrimination by a former female employee. Recent reporting on sexual harassment, especially in the media industry, has shown the fecklessness of the standard HR department, and in many cases its tendency to serve management

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

MY CAREER PATH

Adrian Chen

Staff writer at *The New Yorker*

- Worked at a Minson Brother's hardware store in Rutland, Vermont, at 16 and then cashiered at Home Depot and Staples.
- **Did market research for Nielsen,** watching primetime television and identifying product placement.
- First journalism job was at *Michigan Daily*, at the University of Michigan. Climbed steadily from there, working at *Willamette Week*, The Onion, Slate, Gawker, *National Geographic*, and, as of February 2016, *The New Yorker*.

Newsroom unionizing has become a way to ask what it means to be a journalist in the 21st century.

rather than workers or complainants. Last November, soon after the drive at Vox was announced publicly, Editorial Director Lockhart Steele was fired following a Medium post by a former employee that referred to sexual harassment. Vox brought in an outside law firm to investigate. Brandom says the incident made him realize "that was the time you'd really need someone there whose job it is to represent employee needs. This is the time you need a union."

In January, Vox Media recognized the WGAE to represent about 400 of its employees. In our conversations, Bell appears to be moved by the experience. At times she is very careful in her choice of words, clearly worried something she might say could cause a rift between management and staff. "It meant a lot to me that, publicly, the unions talked about how much they love this company, and how much they want it to continue to be a place they love to work," Bell says. "I think they want to help make journalism work and," she pauses, "we need to figure that out."

Newsroom unionizing has become a way to ask what it means to be a journalist in the 21st century. Ought journalists hold the institutions that employ them to the same standards of behavior as the organizations they cover? Does failing to do so compromise the work of an individual journalist? Can a reporter cover sexual harassment if one's manager has also been accused? What, if anything, separates a journalist from the public actions of their employer?

When Nolan started at Gawker in 2008, it was a scrappy, work-from-home-or-bring-your-own-laptop operation, as well as the sort of glamorous digital startup that inspired magazine features on how it represented "the current ethos of young New York," as *New York* magazine once put it. The company's growth into a profitable business competing with established media outlets was as haphazard as it was rapid. As the recession bore down, a New York Department of Labor inquiry into the company's employment practices triggered an overhaul of pay and benefits. Gawker's radical openness had, by that point, come into very public questioning. When Gawker.com finally closed in 2016, after Univision declined to acquire the site in its purchase of Gawker Media, Nolan had published more posts—14,286—than any other Gawker author. But in his nine years with the site, he'd seen his job change. Nolan says part of his motivation to bring in a union was to "lock in" the things he liked about his work, including the less tangible asset of editorial freedom. Eventually, he says, he began to see collective bargaining as "a basic feature of the workplace, something everybody should have."

The speed at which unionization has proliferated might look precipitate, but the nature of workplaces tends to change faster than both the laws that govern them and the business models that shape them. As they live through the ever-shifting existential crisis within the business, young journalists are evaluating the conditions in which they work, and doing it in public so as to show their relationship to that work. It's clear, at least, that they see themselves as workers. CJR

GETTING ORGANIZED

II. More Secure Jobs, Bigger Paychecks

The reasons for unionizing haven't changed much in the last 80 years

AUTHOR
Steven Greenhouse

It was 1933, and the Great Depression was pummeling the newspaper industry. *The New York World*, once owned by Joseph Pulitzer and the city's largest paper, had closed two years earlier, throwing 3,000 people out of work. In many cities, newspapers had cut reporters' pay by a third, far more than that of union-protected typesetters and printers. Seeing many journalist friends get pounded financially, Heywood Broun, a member of the Algonquin Round Table and at the time one of the nation's best-known and best-paid columnists, took it upon himself to spearhead an effort to unionize his fellow "hacks." In August of that year, Broun, who wrote for the *New York World-Telegram*, turned one of his nationally syndicated columns into a rallying cry: "The fact that newspaper editors and owners are genial folk should hardly stand in the way of the organization of a newspaper writers' union. There should be one."

Broun's column was like rain on parched soil. Within two months, chapters of the American Newspaper Guild sprouted in New York, Boston, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Duluth, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia. In April 1934, the Guild signed its first contract—it was with *The Philadelphia Record* and included provisions on maximum hours, overtime, a minimum pay scale, and paid vacations. By June, 10 months after Broun's first column, the Guild had 7,000 members, with 125 delegates from 70 papers attending the union's first convention that month.

In addition to pushing for better pay and job security, many reporters in the Newspaper Guild's early days were looking for guarantees that they could do their work without powerful publishers like William Randolph Hearst and Frank Gannett, a fierce critic of Franklin D. Roosevelt and a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination

THE ORGANIZER
Heywood Broun, columnist who proposed the first "newspaper writers' union," which later became the NewsGuild

COURTESY NEWSGUILD

in 1940, pressing them to tilt their journalism to the right. Ben Scott, a senior adviser at New America who wrote his dissertation on the Newspaper Guild's early years, says its founding "was all about creating a way to wall off the integrity of professional journalists from the political interests and concerns of the publishers."

One reason that Broun—once described by labor historian Christopher Phelps as a "big-hearted, gin-imbibing, lumbering bear of a man"—insisted on calling the new group a "guild" was to mollify newspaper editors and reporters who thought unions were only for the blue-collar proletariat. In the 1930s, even though many journalists didn't have college degrees, many viewed themselves as part of a "professional elite." Broun sought to convince them otherwise. "The men who make up the papers of this country would never look upon themselves as what they really are—hacks and white-collar slaves," he wrote, adding: "Any attempt to unionize leg, rewrite, desk or makeup men would be laughed to death by these editorial hacks themselves. *Union? Why, that's all right for dopes like printers, not for smart guys like newspaper men!*" (Broun's sexist language was typical of the time, when discrimination was rampant and few women worked as reporters.) Broun noted that those "dopes," i.e., the unionized printers, were "getting on an average some 30 percent better than the smart fourth estaters," while "the 'smart' editorial department boys will continue to work forty-eight hours a week because they love to hear themselves referred to as 'professionals' and because they consider unionization as lowering their dignity." Broun wrote:

> "Obviously, the publishers, by patting their fathead employees on the head and calling them 'professionals,' hope to maintain this working week scale. And they'll succeed, for the men who made up the editorial staffs of the country are peculiarly susceptible to such soothing classifications as 'professionals,' 'journalists,' 'members of the fourth estate,' 'gentlemen of the press,' and other terms."

The American Newspaper Guild was established in an era when unions were mushrooming across the US, spurred by two New Deal laws, the National Industrial Recovery Act—a 1933 law that was declared unconstitutional—and then the National Labor Relations Act, enacted in 1935. Back then, many publishers—unlike most of today's digital companies—aggressively resisted unionization. The Associated Press fired a reporter, Morris Watson, for his pro-union activity, and his case went all the way to the Supreme Court. In one of the pivotal, a-switch-in-time-saves-nine cases upholding New Deal legislation, the high court ruled that Watson had been fired illegally and should be reinstated. In that 1937 case, *Associated Press v. NLRB*, the Justices rejected the publishers' arguments that their freedom of the press was being violated by federal laws that protected workers' right to unionize and bargain collectively.

In 1938, Hearst's *Chicago Herald-Examiner* and *Chicago Evening-American* fired several union supporters in an effort to defeat an organizing drive. Those firings sparked a 15-month strike in which Hearst management employed hardball anti-union tactics not uncommon in the first half of that century. Thugs working for management shoved a Guild officer's car into the Chicago River, and later did likewise to a union sound car. A Guild officer was beaten entering his home, and the Guild's Chicago office was burglarized, its membership files taken. Guild strikers told of management having drivers back up their trucks against the picket lines, race their engines, and choke them with the exhaust—all before the drivers beat them with clubs and rubber hoses. Hearst, hurt badly by the strike, shut down the *Herald-Examiner* in 1939 and merged it into the *Evening-American*, creating the *Chicago Herald-American*.

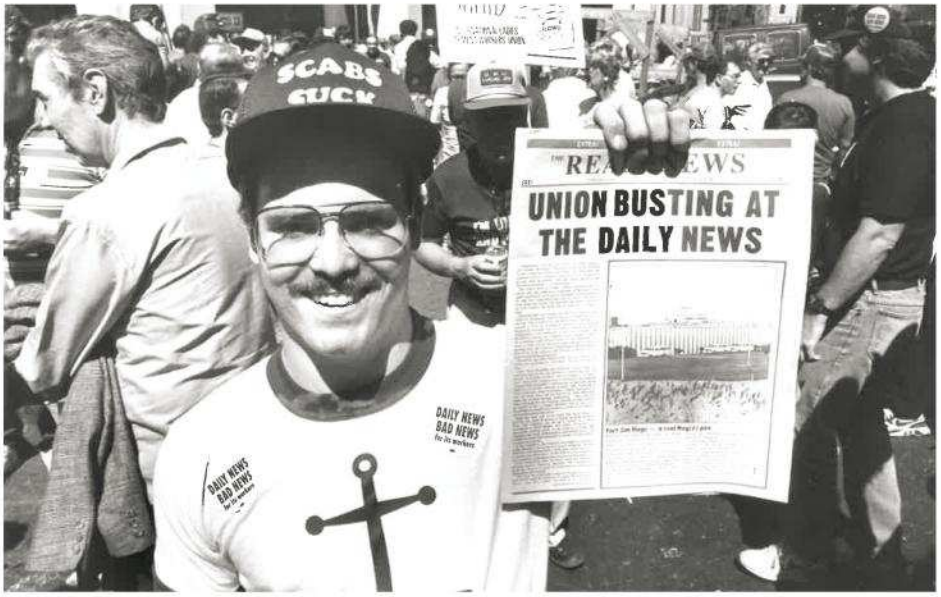
Now, eight decades later, journalists are again rushing to unionize—this time in digital media. More than 2,000 editorial employees have unionized at Slate, Salon, HuffPost, Vice, Vox, The Root, The Intercept, The Daily Beast, and other news websites. Unlike in the 1930s, two unions are vying for these workers: the NewsGuild (Broun's American Newspaper Guild renamed itself the Newspaper Guild in 1970, and with newsprint on the wane, again renamed itself the NewsGuild in 2015) and the Writers Guild of America East (WGAE).

Although WGAE and NewsGuild officials don't like to discuss it, there is an undeniable competition between the two unions in wooing digital workers. The two unions have their pitches. The WGAE boasts that it is hipper and less traditional and has attracted far more digital journalists; the NewsGuild says it has far more experience representing journalists. While many labor leaders say such competition is harmful, it has inarguably intensified and accelerated efforts to unionize journalists.

For all of the changes in journalism since Broun's call to arms, today's journalists are streaming into unions for many of the same reasons as reporters in the 1930s: poor wages, long hours, skimpy benefits, and worries about layoffs. "It's the same issues that motivate people to unionize throughout history: How are they treated, how are they paid, what are the benefits?" says Linda Foley, who was president of the Newspaper Guild from 1995 to 2008. "And there's always a job security component."

Another parallel: Many of today's digital journalists, like their predecessors in the 1930s, are keen to have a union to help ensure they can do their work insulated from pressures by business interests or advertisers. Nowadays, many also want to ensure that their websites have a clear line between journalistic content and so-called sponsored or native content.

There are, of course, many big differences between today's digital unionization and the ferment that gave birth to the Newspaper Guild. Today's digital companies are far more



THE PICKET LINE

1937 (From left) Striking Chicago Newspaper Guildsmen parade through Chicago's Loop; Newsies support the *Brooklyn Eagle* Strike.

1990 New York *Daily News* strikers gather.

COURTESY NEWSGUILD

reluctant to fire employees involved in unionization efforts, WGAE and NewsGuild officials say, even though managers in many other industries often do so to derail organizing drives. In this age of social media, digital executives know that if they fire journalists for supporting a union, Twitter will be ablaze with the news, and their websites and reputations will take a battering—especially when many news websites, and their readers, tilt to the left.

The egregious exception was local news sites DNAinfo and Gothamist, owned by Joe Ricketts, the billionaire founder of TD Ameritrade, where management warned staff that if they unionized, he might close them down. Ricketts made good on that threat when he shuttered both this past November, after 25 of 27 DNAinfo and Gothamist staffers in New York voted to join the WGAE.

The Gawker unionization campaign—and its fevered, very public online debate on the subject—showed that digital organizing would be different in at least one major way from that of unionizing journalists in the past century. It would be infinitely more public because of social media. The same factor also often makes organizing drives faster, quickening the processes of both winning support within the company and obtaining public backing. Eric Vilas-Boas, an editor at Thrillist, says social media gave a big boost to the staff's union drive. "One benefit of the public nature of our campaign was that we have a lot of colleagues in the industry who have very vocal platforms on Twitter," Vilas-Boas says. "That helps to make things shorter and more public immediately."

Lowell Peterson, the executive director of the WGAE, says today's digital journalists insist on transparency and engagement during unionization drives, and the result "has changed the way we organize." "We have to move fast," Peterson adds. "Once it goes digital,

Many of today's digital journalists, like their predecessors, are keen to have a union to help ensure they can do their work insulated from pressure by business interests or advertisers.

it's public. It happens much more quickly, and we have to escalate the process for recognition [from the company] much earlier than in traditional organizing."

Digital media's contract negotiations often focus on issues that would have hardly crossed the minds of Newspaper Guild bargainers in that union's early days. Today's digital journalists often insist on contract provisions that call for greater diversity—more hiring of people of color, women, LGBTQ journalists, and people with disabilities. Some of the contracts call for periodic meetings with management to discuss progress on diversity. This is a sharp departure from organized labor's early decades, when many unions excluded those groups.

Another prominent issue in the industry today is disparity in pay: One writer in a newsroom might make $37,000, and another with similar experience and responsibilities might make $52,000. To narrow such disparities, Gawker's contract established $50,000 minimum pay for writers and $70,000 for senior writers and editors.

In another departure from decades past, Grant Glickson, the president of the NewsGuild's New York chapter, says digital journalists are eager for unions to push for work-family balance. "People are working around the clock," Glickson says. "It's harder on people because of the technology, having to turn in three or four stories a day. So much is being expected of you." Jay Rosen, a professor of journalism at NYU, puts it another way, saying that in digital journalism, there is much more of a "hamster-wheel effect," and a "relentless demand for new content" than existed in older newsrooms.

The Gawker contract contained a provision that would never have been included in traditional newspaper contracts. It doesn't say employees can only be dismissed "for cause." They instead remain at-will employees, which means they can be fired at any time for any reason or no reason at all. This provision has become one of the largest differences between the WGAE and the NewsGuild: Unlike its rival, the NewsGuild says it won't accept a contract without a "for cause" provision. Gawker's employees didn't push for that provision because they viewed journalism as a field in which there were often creative differences between editors and writers. Many felt that editors should be able to fire people if there were serious creative differences between them, so long as the contract provided good severance.

Layoffs at Thrillist and Vice, which was next to unionize after Gawker, helped spur unionization at those websites because staffers wanted severance, and clear guidelines on layoffs. Kim Kelly, a music editor at Vice, says low salaries were another big factor—some writers there earned about $35,000 before unionization. Referring to Shane Smith, Vice's founder and CEO, Kelly says, "When you're reading that Shane was building a $23 million mansion and you're struggling to afford subway fare, that will have an impact on wanting to unionize." Kelly says some websites think they can get away with paying low salaries because journalism is such an interesting field to work in. "It's fun, but my landlord doesn't accept fun as rent," she says. Vice's union contract awarded impressive raises—Vice set a $45,000 minimum for its writers, with some journalists getting immediate pay hikes of $8,000 or $10,000.

In August 2017, Mic, a news and opinion website, shocked its staff by laying off 25 workers without any warning. Shaken by the move,

several staffers began discussing how a union might help, and in February, union supporters turned in cards showing that 88 percent of Mic's editorial staff wanted to join the NewsGuild.

"A big thing that came out of the layoffs was we wanted to make sure we had more job security," says Madeline Taterka, a Mic copy editor and an early union backer. "That if more layoffs came, we would have some voice in the process, and that we would feel secure day to day in our jobs, and not feel that we could lose them at any moment with no notice." In their mission statement, union supporters said they wanted regularly scheduled raises, a 401(k) match, a commitment to diversity, and "a seat at the table." Mic's management agreed to recognize the union in March.

Today, as in the 1930s, many journalists are so eager to unionize that they are all but organizing themselves. Yet, in the Newspaper Guild's early years, many other workers employed by newspapers, such as typesetters, printers, and drivers, were already unionized. Those so-called "craft" workers often used their clout to help journalists unionize and obtain good contracts, although once the Guild grew, there were often tensions with the other newspaper unions.

At today's digital (non-legacy) media companies, there are no typesetters, printers, or drivers, and that in ways gives journalists more power and leverage in operations. Peterson says the WGAE has considered striking against various digital companies, before finally reaching contract deals.

Ben Fractenberg, a reporter for DNAinfo who lost his job when his company was shut down, says that despite management's threat to close, he enthusiastically supported unionization because of his newsroom's lackluster health benefits and absence of raises. He argues that a lot of journalists' concerns have remained the same decade after decade: job security, fair pay, and editorial standards. "I can't imagine much of that has changed," Fractenberg says. "It's a new technology, but a lot of the concerns are the same. People still want a profession where they can support themselves and have a family." CJR

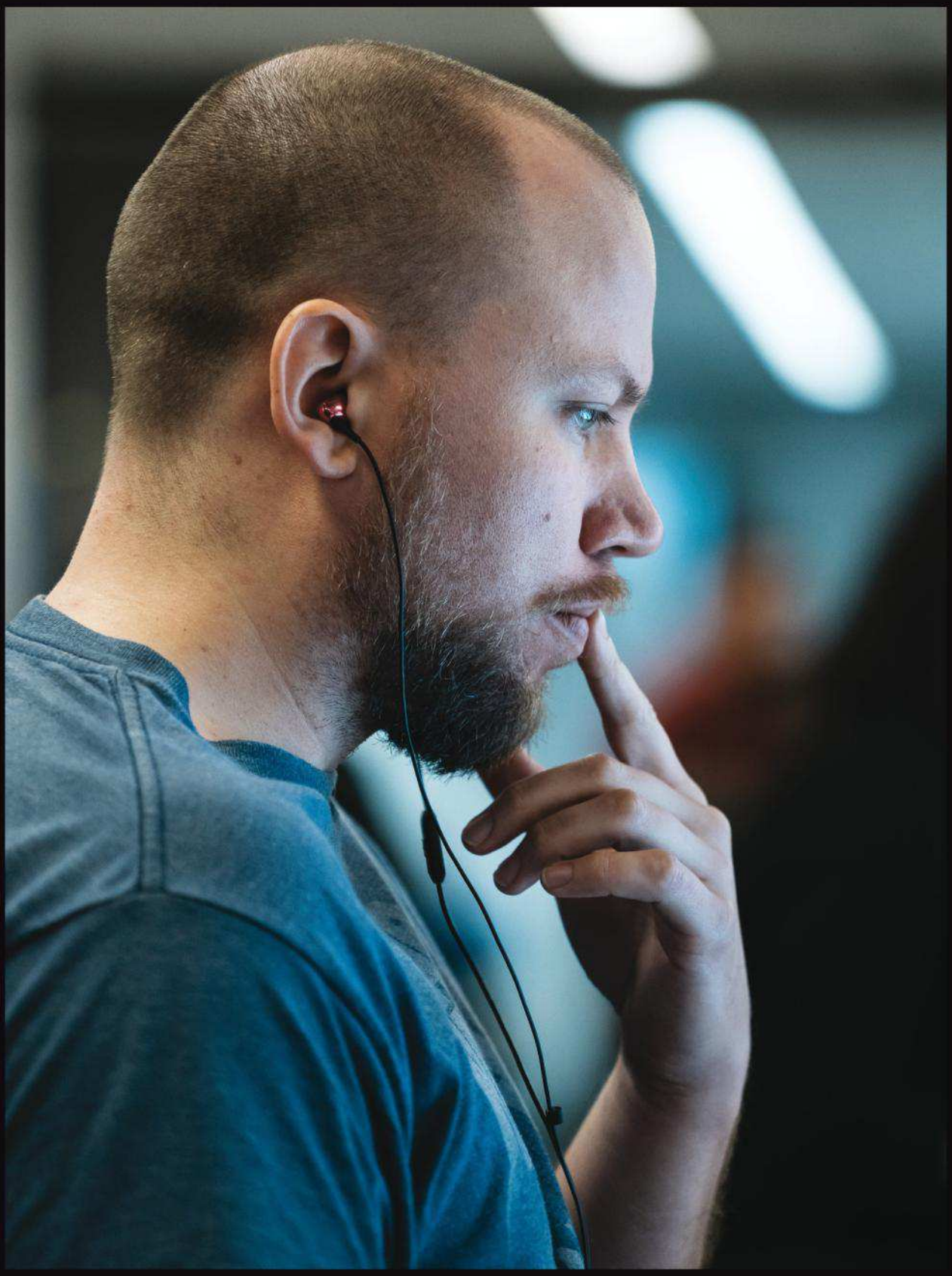
MY CAREER PATH

Stephanie Foo

Producer at *This American Life*

- Got a summer internship at the *San Jose Mercury News* at 16, and shortly after, started writing stories for a small newspaper called the *Evergreen Times*, while also **working at a comic book shop, stacking the shelves, one night per week.**
- At 21, moved to San Francisco and briefly worked at the warehouse of an outdoor patio manufacturing company.
- While running a journalism summer program for *FastForward Magazine*, started a podcast called *Get Me On This American Life*, which eventually led to an internship at the radio show *Snap Judgment* at the age of 22, and a producer position with *This American Life* at 26.

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS



The Desk Set

Six newsrooms, three weeks, one photographer

AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER
William Mebane

I come from a long line of newspaper people: My father was publisher of *The Greenville News* in South Carolina; my grandfather the publisher of the *Charleston Daily Mail*, which merged with the *Charleston Gazette* in 2015 and filed for bankruptcy in January, despite having won a Pulitzer. When I visited these newsrooms as a kid in the '80s, they smelled like ink and sounded like shuffling paper. There was no sense of the challenges that lay ahead. When I returned to the *Gazette* in 2014, it was clearly under tremendous financial pressure to keep the lights on.

CJR asked me to create a series of photographs for this issue that would document the places journalists work—the desks where they type, the chairs in which they sit, the snacks they hoard, the detritus that covers their workspaces. I visited six newsrooms: the New York and Washington, DC, bureaus of HuffPost, *Washington City Paper*, New York *Daily News*, *USA Today*, and Mic.

The digital newsrooms reminded me of Silicon Valley startups. Some were equipped with meditation and yoga rooms. There were refrigerators stocked with free, healthy snacks and drinks, and espresso makers; one even had beer on tap. Every infrastructural nuance had an energy that communicated *we've got this*, a self-assurance that comes from being young, or from having venture capital backing, or both.

The New York *Daily News*, on the other hand, was quiet, aside from the occasional reporter on a phone interview. TV screens were muted. A cartoonist worked quietly with pen and paper. The newsroom reminded me of co-working spaces—where people work alone, together.

The place that felt the most familiar was the *Washington City Paper* during its issue close. The alt-weekly felt like a legacy publication whose employees were well aware of the precariousness of their institution's survival. Employees spoke openly about how, just last year, they had almost gone out of business. The entire staff helped choose the cover art and craft the front-page headlines. Instead of going out for beers, someone brought in a six-pack, and the team kept going.

It's a scene intimately familiar to anyone who's done the work, and a reminder of the commitment and drive, even against the odds, in these remarkable places. CJR

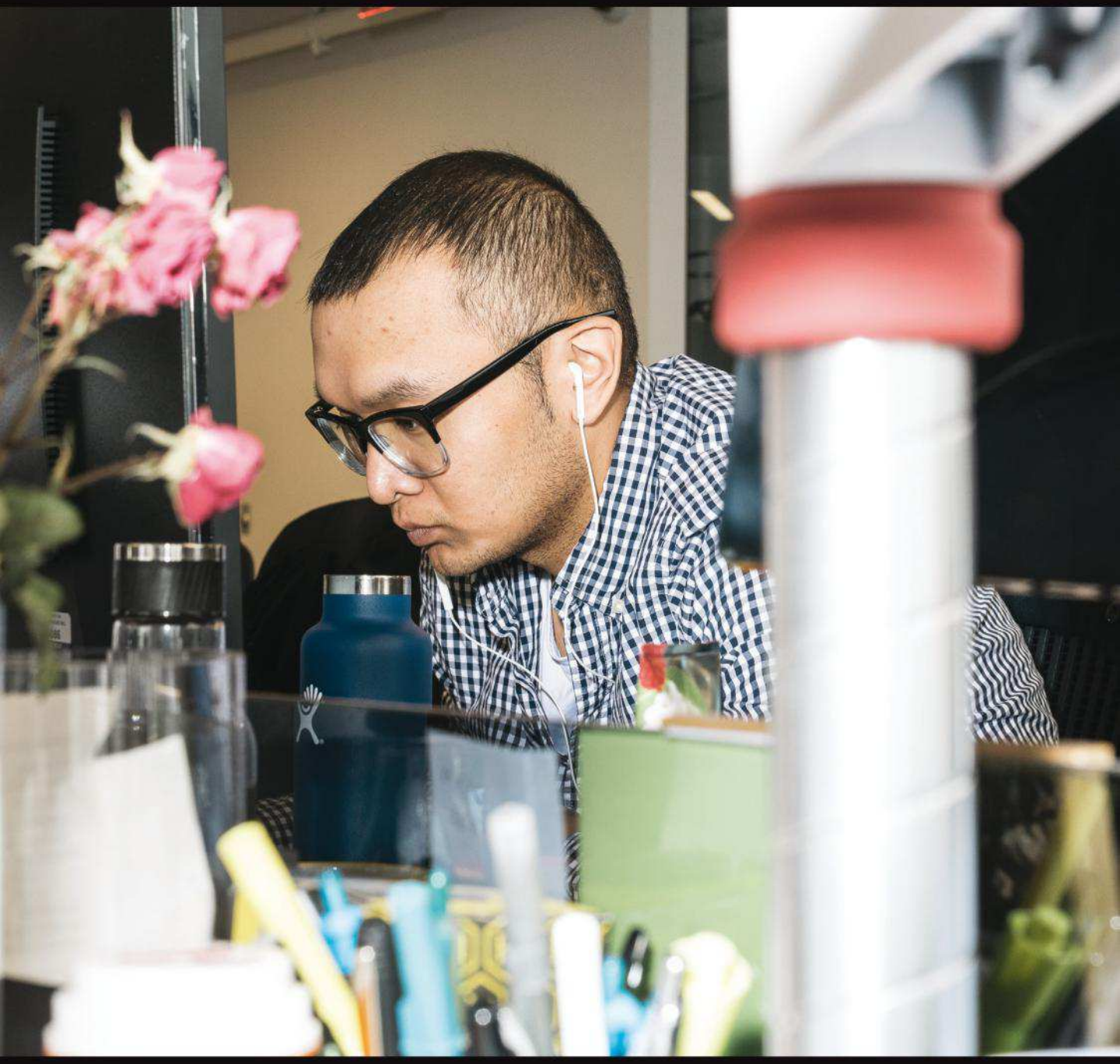
« Andy McDonald, reporter, HuffPost New York

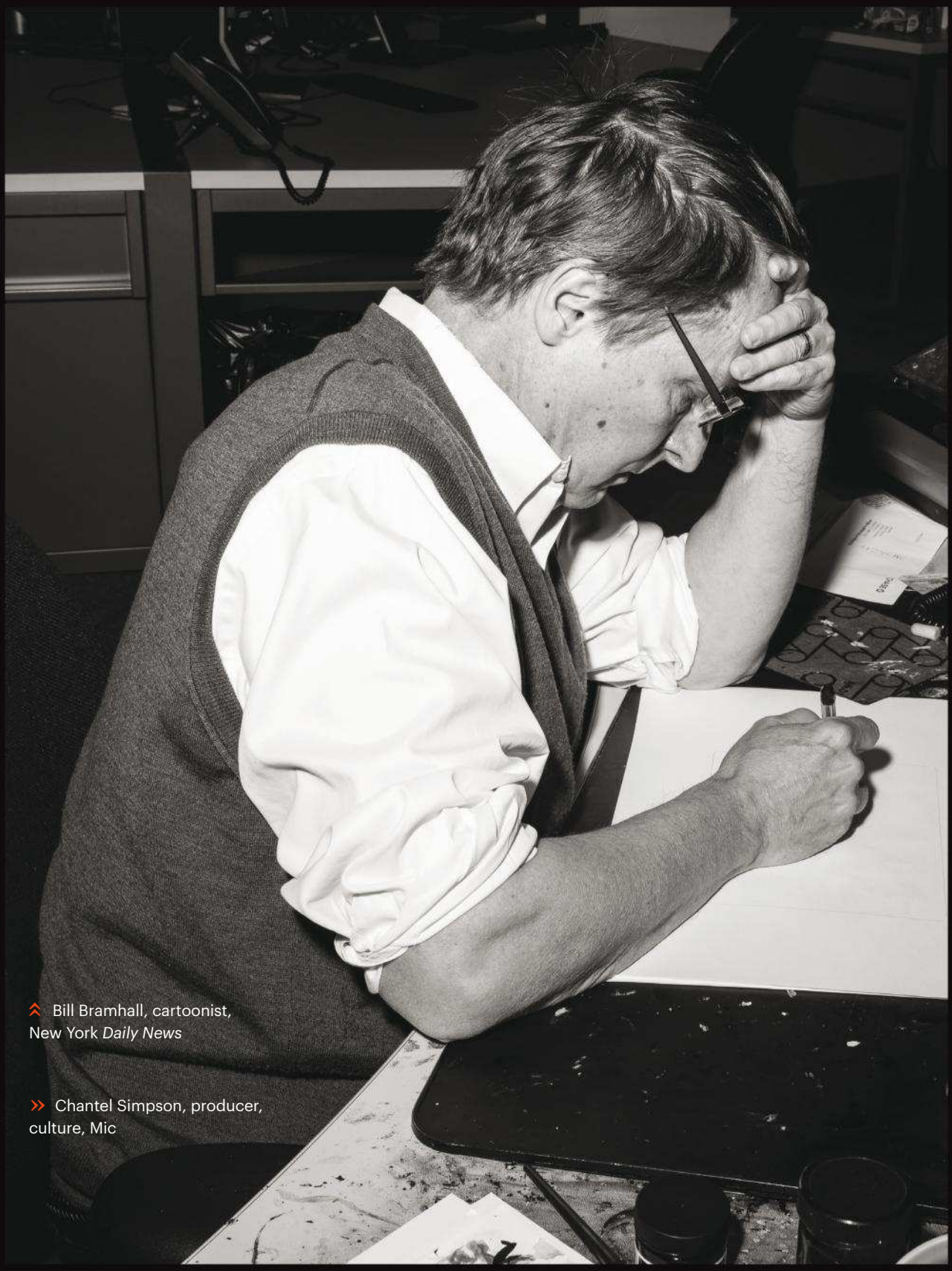
« Jesse Kipp, software architect, HuffPost New York

» Delores Thompson, sports editorial assistant, New York *Daily News*

Anna McGrady, analytics editor, HuffPost New York

Neil Francisco, senior creative services designer, Mic





» Bill Bramhall, cartoonist, New York *Daily News*

» Chantel Simpson, producer, culture, Mic


The Great
MacBook Air

How journalism got so out of touch with the people it covers

Remove

AUTHOR
Sarah Jones

PHOTOGRAPHER
William Mebane

To become a journalist, Rajaa Elidrissi knew she would need a strategy. Growing up in a low-income household in Elmhurst, Queens, she started collecting clips at age 13. "I went to a high school that was not a high-ranking high school, and I was pretty aware that it was really hard to get into a good college," she explains. After graduating in 2016 with an anthropology degree from Wesleyan University, she knew she needed to be practical—she couldn't afford to take an unpaid internship; she had to start working—and looked for where the jobs were. That year, the jobs were in video. Currently a producer for CNBC, Elidrissi is on a secure track, for now at least. But if the industry should pivot away from video any time soon, she's ready. "I see a lot of jobs for social media editors," she says, so she's started studying content analytics tools. She knows she has to stay smart and keep moving if she wants to continue as a journalist.

Elidrissi's calculus is familiar to me—coming from a low-income background, I entered journalism by looking for where the jobs were. I graduated from a blue-collar public high school in Appalachian

Virginia, and attended a conservative Christian college because, with scholarships, it's where I could afford to go. To get a job out of college, I deliberately built a skill set to supplement a résumé deficient in elite degrees or high-profile internships, and became a social media editor—Elidrissi's backup career—and eventually, a staff writer. From where I sit, I don't know many national journalists who have a background like mine. In fact, the industry sometimes seems designed to keep us out of newsrooms altogether.

Differences do separate me from Elidrissi. My parents aren't immigrants, and I don't belong to a cultural or religious minority; overall, society placed fewer obstacles in my path. But speaking with her provided a moment of real catharsis. Anyone coming from a low-income background runs similar mental calculations: How do we get into journalism? And if we do get in, how do we afford to stay in?

My conversations with Elidrissi and other sources for this piece are the only conversations of their kind I've had since I entered journalism full time—honest conversations about class, ambition, and storytelling. Perhaps that's a function of the career. Journalists aren't supposed to become the story, and talking about your background can veer into navel-gazing. But journalists aren't automatons, either. Whether you cover pop culture or poverty, your background shapes your path into your chosen field. And if your background includes poverty, that path contains boulders.

"The first hurdle was paying for college. So I studied very hard. I got scholarships. I worked two or three jobs to pay the bills while I was in college," says Sarah Smarsh, a Kansas-based independent journalist who has been covering class, inequality, and red-state politics for 17 years. Smarsh comes from a working-class family, and she knew that just making it to college signaled the start of a longer battle. "I didn't know anyone in a newsroom who was picking me out of the pile for an internship," she says. "I convinced newsrooms to bring me in as an intern."

"I would say the second hurdle was social capital," she adds. "Even though I made it to college, I still didn't possess social capital."

Like Smarsh, I knew I had to earn scholarships, and once in college, I quickly learned that my Walmart wardrobe set me apart in all the wrong ways. To achieve social mobility, the poor must culturally assimilate. You have to dress a certain way, speak a certain way, and get to know certain people. The third is impossible unless you accomplish the first two goals. Even if you manage all three, you may not experience true social mobility. Assimilation may grant you a certain degree of social capital, but social capital does not inevitably bestow its financial equivalent. Real capital—wealth—remains the surest way to survive journalism's fluctuations. But by entering journalism at all, low-income people agree to extend their precarity for an indefinite term.

Smarsh felt that precarity keenly when she went freelance six years ago. "I had no savings and no family financial cushion to lean on. I didn't have a bread-winning husband," she explains. "It was just me, and literally nothing in a bank account. Hustling. Sending pitches. Being uninsured."

Possession of a "cushion"—wealth, again—can become necessary to stay in the field. "I try to open doors as much as I can for other

‘The only people who get to rage about poverty and economic hardship are people who are not experiencing it.’

women of color and other journalists of color,” *New York Times* journalist and MacArthur Fellow Nikole Hannah-Jones recently told the Women’s Media Center. “For an unemployed journalist who has had seven or 10 interviews and nothing pans out, I don’t think I can rightly tell that person not to leave the industry.... And it’s hard to tell people to stay in a field that’s not valuing them, where they are having a hard time finding full-time work. That’s a precarious position.”

To shore up their positions, some would-be journalists go on to advanced degrees. A lack of social capital means a need to take on debt, just to get to square one. “As a black woman, I didn’t have a choice not to go to J-school—and that’s a sentiment shared among many of my classmates. Journalism is an industry rife with nepotism, where career trajectories are determined more often by the people that you know rather than the quality of your work,” notes Slate’s Rachelle Hampton. After paying her way through journalism school at the University of Kansas, Smarsh also took on debt to earn an MFA in creative nonfiction writing from Columbia University. “That might seem foolish to someone who even grew up middle-class, because of the risk inherent in taking on such debt to enter a field that hardly assures the sort of income that’s going to pay it off,” she says. “For me, in the context of poverty, it was like I had nothing to lose.”

Getting that first job is a partial victory. There are bills to pay afterwards, and collectors don’t care about your prose. But let’s say you get that first job, and then a second. And let’s say, for argument’s sake, you keep going, and now you’re based in a national newsroom or some other big-name outlet. It doesn’t even matter if you cover poverty. You could cover pop culture, or review books, or turn numbers into charts. You’ll still be an outlier, working a newsroom that may consistently miss the class angle to stories, if it covers class at all.

A 2013 study by the Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project found that in 52 major newsrooms, poverty accounted for less than 1 percent of coverage every year from 2007 to 2012. “Journalists are drawn more to people making things happen than those struggling to pay bills; poverty is not considered a beat; neither advertisers nor readers are likely to demand more coverage, so neither will editors; and poverty stories are almost always enterprise work, requiring extra time and commitment,” Dan Froomkin wrote for the Nieman Center. Journalists who cover class exclusively, or as part of an intersecting beat like gender or racial justice, tell me they sometimes have to convince editors that their stories are even newsworthy.

“I have heard so many times: Where’s the surprise?” Gary Rivlin, author of *Broke, USA*, says. In Rivlin’s telling, editors frequently want a sensationalistic angle if they’re interested in the story at all. “I try to tell stories of payday lending. The only way to sell a story of payday lending was a contrarian take that said, well, it’s actually a good thing. The only problem is that it’s not a good thing. It’s a rip-off.”

Other journalists say they’ve had similar difficulties placing pieces on class and poverty. Smarsh tells me she’s woven a class sensibility into her work since her first days in a newsroom more than 15 years ago. “When I started being more pointed and overt about class, even five years ago, I had a hell of a time getting the pieces picked up,” she says. “And interestingly, I found that what editors at top US outlets turned down, almost inevitably a top British outlet would pick up.”

"It became such a pattern that I did develop a little bit of a theory that the UK has centuries on us, as a society or as a political unit, in reckoning with the concept of class and in finding a language to discuss it," she adds. "We are in a country that has been telling itself, falsely and hypocritically, since its very foundation, that this is a country where your economic origins do not determine the outcome of your life."

Smarsh's statement seems obvious: I know from life and from reporting that American society is boldly, unrepentantly rigged against its most marginalized members. But this fact, while clear to me, may not be to everyone else. America is wedded to the myth of its own greatness. It insists it has created a meritocracy, which it sustains through the power of assertion. This has a knock-on effect: Journalists inhabit a skewed society, and not all of them realize it. The industry therefore suffers from structural inequalities that reflect its surroundings. Women, people of color, and people with disabilities are relatively absent from newsroom leadership for the same reasons they are relatively absent everywhere. These absences impact coverage in every respect, and poverty reporting is not exempt.

Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed* and *Fear of Falling*, tells me that even with decades of experience, she's always found it difficult to convince editors to cover

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

MY CAREER PATH

Pamela Colloff

Senior reporter at ProPublica and writer at large at *The New York Times Magazine*

- Had two internships in college, at *SPIN* and *The Village Voice*.
- After graduating, took a spontaneous road trip to Austin, Texas, **and ended up spending three years waiting tables during the day and freelancing at night.**
- Hired by *Texas Monthly* as a staff writer at 25, and stayed at the magazine for 20 years, until March 2017, taking a dual role at *The New York Times Magazine* and ProPublica, the first of its kind.

poverty. And when outlets do assign a piece, financial hardship can complicate the reporting process. "I got an assignment from *The New York Times* in 2009 to write a series of essays about the effects of the recession on people who were already economically struggling," she explains, "because at that time, the typical *Times* article was about people who had to drop their private pilates class." So Ehrenreich hit the road, collecting stories from working-class Americans across the country—only to encounter a financial roadblock.

"I realized I was not going to make enough money from my payments from the *Times* to cover my expenses," she continues. "My next great realization was that the only people who get to rage about poverty and economic hardship are people who are not experiencing it, who have some kind of buffer and savings." Ehrenreich later launched the Economic Hardship Reporting Project to fill in this funding gap and support working-class journalists covering poverty in America.

But nearly a decade later, the national press still frequently stumbles over poverty, and the related issue of class. "Well, I've said enough about the subject of sexual harassment, and how the focus has lingered so much on activists and media people, and that's not where the rampant sexual harassment is going on," Ehrenreich says. "It's important to cover and bring to light; the world is a better place without Harvey Weinstein. But it leaves out these stories of housekeepers and agricultural workers."

Jenni Monet, an independent journalist who covers indigenous stories, got her start working in a tiny newsroom in the Four Corners region, where covering Navajo tribal events was part of the daily beat. She's noticed differences between local and national newsrooms when it comes to writing about class. "My entire career has been trying to convince editors to cover Native stories in a way that isn't poverty porn," she says.

"It wasn't until I started working in places like New York City [that] I started to see the extreme disconnect that exists," she adds. "It's realizing the enormous amount of explaining involved."

Those failures became particularly clear during the 2016 coverage of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation's protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline. "Here you have the largest indigenous-led movement of our modern time," says Monet. It started with an environmental agenda deeply rooted in race-based politics that dealt with segregation, that dealt with cyclical poverty based on government decisions that have gravely affected tribal communities for decades.

"And guess how the media responded?" Monet asks. "At first, they didn't show up. When they finally did, it was all novelty-based. Look at this camp, they have teepees and kitchens and they cook and it's cute!" Standing Rock, as Monet recounts it, was a missed opportunity for the national press, an inevitable failure for such a whitewashed industry, whose coverage of the intersection of race and poverty is uneven at best.

But sometimes newsrooms can get it right. Matthew Desmond's 2017 *New York Times* article on the mortgage-interest deduction is a superlative example: Desmond's reportage both flips a popular narrative—that entitlements mostly benefit the poor—and examines the way one benefit for home ownership reinforces structural inequalities. "Differences in homeownership rates remain the prime driver of

Whether you cover pop culture or poverty, your background shapes your path into your chosen field. And if your background includes poverty, that path contains boulders.

the nation's racial wealth gap," he writes. "If black and Hispanic families owned homes at rates similar to whites, the racial wealth gap would be reduced by almost a third." Readers came away from Desmond's piece better understanding how class inequality reinforces racial inequality, and it's because he presents context.

When pieces lack context, they provide incomplete accounts that can reinforce damaging stereotypes. NPR's 2017 investigation into fraudulent graduation rates at Washington, DC's Ballou High School focused heavily on the school's high truancy rate, but restricted mention of poverty to an anonymous student's brief quotes and a few passing references to "traumatic events" in students' lives. Ballou, of course, is a predominantly black school in a predominantly black neighborhood. The school's problems can be traced directly to segregation, gentrification, broken-windows policing, and education reform; each problem or policy binds a knot where race ties into class. "I think the national press does have a strain of language around economic inequality," says Jamilah King, who covers race and justice for *Mother Jones* magazine. "We don't necessarily do a good job of marrying that with racial justice."

Journalists who aren't from low-income backgrounds aren't necessarily hostile to the poor, but class prejudice can manifest as a form of blindness. Based on my own experiences and the experiences others related to me for this piece, simple ignorance is much more common. It's more that certain experiences, like poverty, are opaque to people who have not lived them.

In the lead-up to the 2016 election, journalism's class blindness showed everywhere: Story after story reinforced Trump's self-appointed role as the champion of white working-class America. The vast majority of Trump voters, as we now well know, boasted an income of $50,000 or higher. Suburban America is Trump Country. Though there have been some corrective pieces, the average Trump Country profile still stars low-income whites—who, shock of shocks, still support their candidate, no matter the swing in the news cycle. These profiles don't produce any real news, and they don't bring readers any closer to understanding the reasons for Trump's victory, more than a year later.

For once, it's not so difficult to convince editors to cover poor people. But that Trumpian focus can also narrow coverage. While there's value in understanding how Obama counties became Trump counties, these stories form one narrative thread in a broader story about the consequences of de-unionization, extractive capitalism, and ingrained racial prejudice.

Meanwhile, the other true stories of working-class America struggle to break through the noise. "When Trump was first elected, there was a lot of talk and discussion in the media at large, but also inside newsrooms, about what we should do to better cover the white middle and white working class," says King. "I think that's sort of misguided. Obviously, white folks are not the only working-class folks."

Coverage of the working class skews powerfully to Trump, partly because the president spews so much chum into the news cycle. But a reactive press cannot necessarily fulfill its function as the fourth estate. No story springs fully formed from the ether. Stories have histories, and their lineages can overlap with each other in meaningful ways. Consider the electoral weakness of the Democratic Party: This is a multifaceted story. De-unionization is one of those facets—and it, in turn, is linked to a decline in mining and manufacturing jobs. It's easy to criticize in hindsight, but it seems fair to say that if de-unionization had received more national attention—if it had been linked, repeatedly, to economic losses and to organized labor's status as an electoral engine for Democrats—perhaps the press would have anticipated Hillary Clinton's Rust Belt woes.

Post-Trump, national interest in unions increased. A recent statewide teacher walkout in West Virginia received coverage on CNN and headlines in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other major outlets. It's not yet clear if walkouts in Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona will benefit from the same attention, and there's still a disparity visible in which labor stories receive national coverage, and which do not.

Labor stories are instructive because they're about working people, who can also be low-income. It's hard to see how this will change as long as Trump is the most popular hook. The stories of the poor possess their own texture and weight. Poverty is a series of surprises, most of them horrible; life, for the poor, means careening from one plot twist to another while the world looks straight through you.

It shouldn't be this way, and in journalism, at least, the solutions are obvious. Pay a living wage. Openly advertise your jobs—and send the entry-level listings to state schools as well as the Ivy League. Reconsider keeping your entire staff in an expensive coastal city. Don't limit class, or the various beats in its category, to election-year hits or special investigations. These stories deserve everyday attention for what they tell us about the cracks in America's façade. Make it easier for poor folks to enter your world, and we'll even tell those stories for you. We're resilient, after all, and we make damn good journalists. CJR

‘I was trying to not have a job’

At some point, nearly every journalist might consider the great leap: Should I go into business for myself? CJR contributing editor **Gabriel Snyder** sat down with four current and former journalists who have taken that risk to ask: Do journalists make good entrepreneurs?

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

GABRIEL SNYDER What inspired you to start a business in the first place? Why not just go get another job?

KURT ANDERSEN Well, I had a job [as the architecture and design critic for *Time* magazine] and I was trying to not have a job—it wasn't about starting a business. As Graydon [Carter, co-founder of *Spy* magazine] and I became friends, we started talking about the magazines we'd loved when we were younger that weren't around now, and just as a lark, we thought, what would be that magazine today? Well, it would be funny, and it would be honest, and it would report all these things that we hear at the bar from our journalist friends and never get published…and it would be funny.

So it began, really, just as a way to have lunch, and to have Time Inc. pay for our lunches, and dream up this magazine.

Then, at a certain point it seemed like, well, maybe we should really do this, and my wife, Anne Kreamer, introduced us to a college friend, a business guy, and that was sort of what we needed to make it go beyond just a larkish pretext for lunch. It wasn't that we wanted to start a business but, you know, there was no internet then, so starting a magazine is what you did if you were us and you had the inclination to start a thing.

Erica, do you remember when you first wanted to start a business?

ERICA CERULO Yeah, I definitely didn't recognize it as entrepreneurial spirit at all. I was looking for a sense of ownership, of wanting to create and build this thing and have the vision to bring it to life.

Our Panelists

Choire Sicha
New York Times Styles editor. Co-founder of The Awl blog network, including The Awl and The Hairpin, which closed in January.

Elizabeth Spiers
Founder of The Insurrection, a political consultancy for progressive candidates. Co-founding editor of Gawker and former editor in chief of the *New York Observer*.

Erica Cerulo
Co-founder, Of a Kind, a fashion and design retail site that was acquired by Bed Bath & Beyond in 2015. Former editor at *Details* and *Lucky*.

Kurt Andersen
Host of radio show *Studio 360*. Co-founder of *Spy* magazine and media news site Inside.com. Former editor in chief of *New York* magazine.

(CLOCKWISE STARTING WITH TOP LEFT) COURTESY THE NEW YORK TIMES; CELESTE SLOMAN; MARCO LAU ; COURTESY OF A KIND

I'd started working in magazines in 2005, and I was starting to see that the role of editors [was] really changing. It felt like I maybe wanted to be an editor in chief of something. So when we came up with the idea for Of a Kind, it became very interesting to me, not relying on this advertising model that had fueled media, and to be able to sell the things that we were writing about as our revenue stream.

People on the business side of media really like to ridicule the business sense of editorial employees. Do the skill sets overlap, or are they distinct?

ELIZABETH SPIERS I co-founded a nonprofit when I was in college, and as a result ended up in a startup right after school. After that I was a buy-side tech equity analyst. I was concerned when we were doing Gawker that people wouldn't take me seriously as a writer, and for quite a while, they didn't.

I had a sort of quasi-stalker who followed me through five different jobs anonymously and kept explaining to me that I would never make it in journalism because I was a fraud, because I hadn't paid my dues, and I didn't go to J-school. I think I overcompensated for it, but then it backfired on me, where I got pigeonholed as a writer. I would go into business meetings, and I would have potential investors or partners look at me and say, well, you're a good writer, but what do you know about business? I think sometimes when those criticisms come out, the people on the business side just don't like the idea of you not staying in your lane.

Erica, I'm curious about your experience. I can see where you're drawing on your work in magazines, but it's different when you're actually selling stuff.

ERICA I mean, we knew nothing—my business partner nor I—about retail when we got into it. One of the first steps we took was taking this summer class that Elizabeth offered for two summers, I can't remember what it was called…

ELIZABETH I had a little bit of free time and I wanted to volunteer on some level, but I couldn't find the thing that I wanted to volunteer for—which is that I wanted to [teach] young entrepreneurs who didn't know how to set up a business. I said, It's not a technical nonprofit. I'm not taking any money, just send me your business idea and apply. I got something like 28 applications for the first class, and I was enormously delighted that most of them were women entrepreneurs. Clare and Erica were in my first class.

ERICA One thing that transfers from being a journalist or an editor directly into running a business is your sense that you can find the answer to a question, that you can do the research and get to the bottom of something.

KURT And you are willing to actually do the gritty stuff, which every journalist, god knows, does herself or himself.

ERICA Exactly, like learning how to charge New York State taxes; you just figure out how to do these things.

CHOIRE SICHA I mean, you started a real business, but a lot of us started media businesses, which, most people will admit, aren't real businesses.

ELIZABETH Well, I would say Erica and Clare sell actual things that you can hold in your hands…

KURT I think you guys are saying the same thing. It's a matter of temperament, and whether your background was working at a magazine or at a newspaper, it's this kind of all-in, obsessive, convince people to do things, to get it done. And to me, it overlaps a lot with the kind of journalist I never was, which is the actual shoe-leather reporter kind of journalist. Those people are entrepreneurs.

Are journalists who start businesses in a boom prepared for the downturn, or is that a different kind of skill set?

KURT I approach almost everything in life with a tragic sense of doom just ahead, so I was never surprised when things got hard. So again, I think it's a matter of temperament. With *Spy*, we were able to raise money from people, many of whom had just made

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I would have potential investors look at me and say, well, you’re a good writer, but what do you know about business? I think sometimes the people on the business side just don’t like the idea of you not staying in your lane.

a lot of money in the beginning of the bull market of the 1980s, and then by 1991 there was a recession. I think people can be, if not fooled, at least encouraged to think it’s easier than it is in the long run.

Choire, what was the hardest or most surprising part of actually operating The Awl as an LLC?

CHOIRE It’s pretty [much] all horrific. I don’t see a huge line between job-having and being an entrepreneur. I’m always prepared to be fired on some level, so it seems all very temporary.

I mean, honestly, like any kind of legal framework, you make some choices in a business. We made some really weird choices with The Awl about ownership. We shared ownership with people who maintained websites and people who worked on the websites, and at a certain point, we were like, We have to paper this, and then the lawyers were like, What the hell did you do? and we were like, We’ll figure it out! It was just an unending nightmare. I’m not sure we actually even finally figured it out before the whole thing ended up in the warm arms of the grave. At the end I was just happy to be doing the Paypal and the bathroom cleaning.

ELIZABETH There’s an analogy that Reid Hoffman uses—he’s the founder of LinkedIn—which is that entrepreneurship is like jumping off a cliff and building an airplane on the way down, which I agree with. But what he doesn’t mention is that 99 percent of the time you crash.

ERICA One of the things we always talk about when we talk about selling the business is that the stress before

was existential. The stress now, it's the same amount, but it's just bureaucratic, corporate stress, or just the stress of being managers. But it's not, Oh my god, are we gonna make payroll? Or, What's our runway like? Or, What happens if we take this risk?

Well, I feel like we've gone in sort of a dire direction.

KURT Choire took us there.

I did, too; it was partly my fault. So what are the good parts of running your own business, being your own boss?

ERICA You don't have a boss.

CHOIRE Yeah, it's great.

KURT The one time in the last 30 years that I had a real job was editing *New York* magazine, that they fired me from. I realize I am done with that, you know? Things can collapse and this might not work, but simply being the captain of your own little…not even ship…*boat*, is a pleasure.

ELIZABETH I think I might be the only person at this table that actually gets off on the making-payroll-in-a-month kind of scenario. I enjoy it, and I enjoy the idea that you can evolve what you're doing very quickly. I guess that's startup speak, but it's the idea that you can change on a dime. I think if you enjoy entrepreneurship, it's probably because you have a little bit of a novelty-seeking gene.

CHOIRE I think I don't like jobs because I'm very bad with male authority figures. Like, now that I have a boss, and they tell me to do things, I just like do the opposite, basically. So, I mean, working for myself is sort of the only answer, I think.

KURT Is this your resignation from *The New York Times*?

CHOIRE No! I need the job, I'm an old man, I need the money!

ELIZABETH There's also an inherent thing, though: If you're a decent journalist, you have a problem with authority anyway, which makes you a difficult employee.

CHOIRE That's true. And not a good thing for my retirement.

Kurt, you mentioned that one of your founding inspirations for *Spy* was to not have a job; I was wondering if anyone else shared that.

ERICA I was pretty scared to start my own business. I am pretty risk-averse in general, and I remember the thing I was super stressed about when we quit was not having a schedule and not having any place to be. I remember sitting down with Clare in the café above Whole Foods being like, Okay, so we need to figure out where we're going to work on what days, and I need to know where I'm going on Monday, because just working separately from home was not gonna do it for me.

KURT: I certainly considered myself risk-averse until we started *Spy*. I was 31 years old; I'd never taken a big chance in my life until then.

I think this notion of being risk-averse actually has changed a lot, because now, having a job doesn't feel terribly secure. I wanted to bring up another topic, which is how has it been dealing with the business press?

CHOIRE I always did feel like I was sort of being manipulative with the press. They just need a good quote. I mean, all I desperately want is for anyone to say something funny, so I would just be like, What horrible thing can I say that they'll print? Then I am a horrible person, but everyone's happy in this transactional way.

ELIZABETH Well, you have to tell a story…

CHOIRE Yeah, that's right.

ELIZABETH …and you know how to tell that story, because you know what people are looking for.

KURT I feel grateful that back when I was starting *Spy* magazine, there was no social media, there was no internet, so it was, yeah, okay, the advertising columnist for *The New York Times* is going to do a story. He does it, fine.

“

I don’t see a huge line between job-having and being an entrepreneur. I’m always prepared to be fired on some level, so it seems all very temporary.

That’s that. You didn’t have the quasi-news coverage that social media provides of everything, and probably this conversation as we are having it now.

ERICA This is a real struggle we had with fundraising in general, of being able to paint this picture and tell this story; we always played it too straight. We were realistic about what we were going to do with the business. I think people who come at this with more of an entrepreneurial background, or just have different demeanors, are able to say, Here’s what the hockey-stick growth looks like.

KURT Was that in some sense a female self-sabotage thing?

ERICA I think partly, or just like a female way of thinking that we both ascribed to.

KURT Honesty.

ERICA Yeah, this idea of “honesty.”

Is honesty—or not liking to lie—sort of an occupational hazard of being a journalist?

ELIZABETH You give people what you think are realistic trajectories, because if you don’t, you get punished for them as a female entrepreneur in ways you don’t if you’re a man. If you’re a man, it’s a display of confidence; if you’re a woman, it’s a display of arrogance.

Well, you know, journalists don’t like to fail very much, and entrepreneurship, as you said, Elizabeth, is something that often does involve failure. I’m wondering how you cope with that.

ELIZABETH For me, Donald Trump has tested this aspect of my personality: I always thought I had a pretty good imagination with regard to the way things could go wrong, which I think is a journalistic talent, and it comes in handy as an entrepreneur.

ERICA I feel like I’ve taken kind of the opposite approach and try not to think about anything until it happens, because I can start spiraling really fast about all the things that can go wrong. Unless it’s actually a problem in front of me, I try not to think about it.

For many people who work inside media organizations, “thinking entrepreneurially” is a very en-vogue thing that management is saying. How much does that have to do with actual entrepreneurship?

CHOIRE I think about this a lot, because I’m really a workplace-culture junky. I have a theory I’m still trying out, which is the idea that we should be entrepreneurial is just anti-millennialism.

KURT Really? I would argue that it’s against old people. Or against people who have worked for decades. You have to be entrepreneurial, old man!

“

One thing that transfers from being a journalist directly into running a business is your sense that you can find the answer to a question, that you can do the research and get to the bottom of something.

But I think it might be also just back to the question of staying in your lane. At its best it's saying, Hey, don't just stay in your lane, think of other ways we can do this.

CHOIRE It's really hard in a newsroom to look up and try something new, though. Newsrooms are built upon people being very face-down at a desk.

KURT I mean, real newsrooms of a daily, hourly kind….How can you get your nose out of whatever it's in to think in business development terms, or whatever that's supposed to mean?

ELIZABETH It's convenient for news organizations when margins are being pressured to say, Go be entrepreneurial, because it's a sexier word than saying do more with less.

CHOIRE Journalists are not typically great businesspeople—present company excluded. I don't think I want to see a lot of business thinking from journalists, particularly. I don't think they're great at it.

What kind of journalist would you encourage to go start a business?

CHOIRE I mean, it's gotta be better than most of the jobs out there. Is that a terrible thing to say?

ELIZABETH I think it's absurd to believe that starting a business is going to be easier than being a journalist in this job market. I was a columnist at *Fortune* for a bit, and I got the contract because I had started a Wall Street site called Dealbreaker. I had an office at *Fortune*, and there was a guy who was sort of peer-level to me who was not happy about it, because I hadn't gone through the normal channels to get a column at *Fortune*. I hadn't interned; I hadn't come up through Time Inc.

infrastructure. At one point he came into my office and he starts grilling me about how I got the job, and I said to him, "Well, here's the thing: I started a Wall Street site from scratch, I built up the traffic, it had some readership." And he looked at me and goes, "But you never did the internship here."

In this guy's mind, going up the traditional way was somehow easier than starting a business from scratch, raising money for it, hiring people, monetizing it, growing the audience—in his mind, that was easier.

Are there any personality types you would say are particularly cut out for entrepreneurship?

CHOIRE There's a difference between the lone people and the partner people. I can't do any of this alone.

ELIZABETH If there's a difference, it's that I have less of a sense of self-preservation than the rest of you. I have a high risk tolerance. Actually, the hedge fund guy that I used to work for used to tell me that I had a very high tolerance for pain, so I do think that's a piece of it. It's the "if you can deal with a lot of uncertainty and you like it" that probably makes you cut out for this sort of thing.

ERICA I think you have to be passionate enough to accept that you're only going to spend 10 to 20 percent of your working time doing that thing you're passionate about. Because the rest of it's gonna be the bullshit that makes up the rest of a work day.

KURT There is more bullshit involved in being a boss of anything than there is in just being a journalist—any kind of journalist—whether you love what you're doing or not. Like, it's mostly just typing the words. It's doing the thing rather than talking to Joe about his unhappiness being in that office.

CHOIRE Actually, I would say everything's an office now, that's the Wingification of everything, right?

KURT Yeah, exactly, and we're all getting fired!

I feel like we're getting close to the sort of "brand is you" territory. Is that the same thing as entrepreneurship? I see heads shaking…

KURT No! "The brand called you" is just thinking of yourself as a free agent in the world, more than my father did, you know? But I don't think it's connected at all, and obviously it devolves often to just sheer self-promotion.

ELIZABETH There are people who have built businesses around personal brands, like Gary Vaynerchuk or Seth Godin. Those are really outlier businesses, because you can't scale them. They're more like what VCs derisively call "lifestyle brands." But then they also give money to Gary Vaynerchuk and Seth Godin because they think of them as something that you can't replicate. If the core brand literally dies, you know what happens to the business?

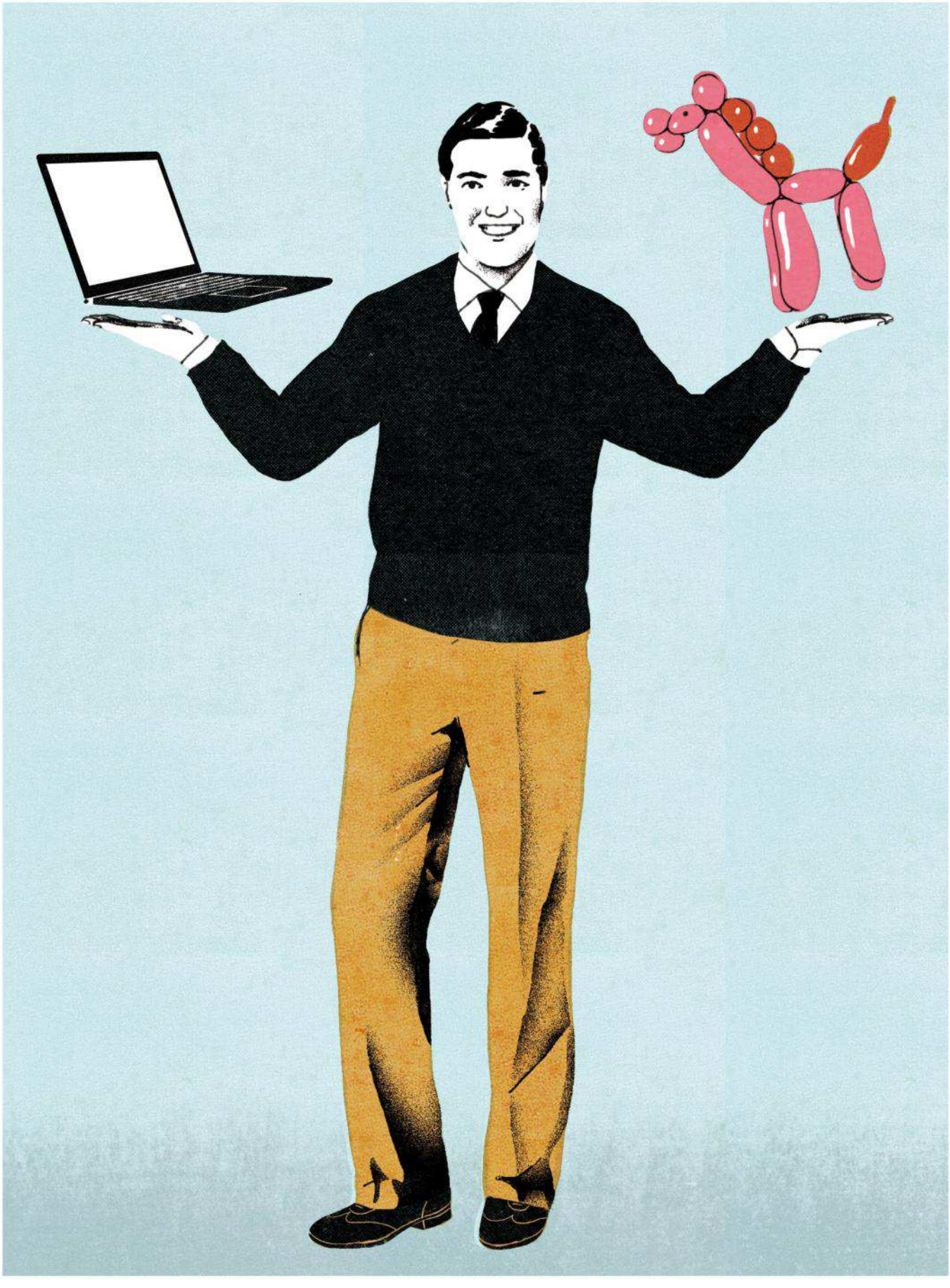
KURT Although we elected a president who was just a brand…

ELIZABETH That is true. And ran a terrible business, too.

Is it possible to be a journalist and an entrepreneur at the same time?

CHOIRE I don't mean the term derisively, but the airport book writers that we all know and love, they are a business, but they pose as journalists or are journalists also. It's an interesting case that these people are monster brands or, for lack of a better word, are enacting journalism. It didn't work out for some of them kind of spectacularly recently, but I think that's when their business got in the way.

ELIZABETH It's really hard, when I think of somebody who's written something I've found useful and also ran a company. Anybody who's a writer knows you need a certain amount of solitude, and the entrepreneurial lifestyle is pretty much the opposite. CJR



The job that helps you stay on the job

The Pain and Joy of the Side Hustle

AUTHOR
Atossa Araxia Abrahamian

ILLUSTRATOR
Sonia Pulido

Michael Thomsen, 40, works as an editor for Condé Nast's special editions and reports stories for Slate, The Outline, and *The Washington Post*. He earns more now, but five years ago, his finances were in shambles. Despite regular gigs writing near-daily columns for *Complex*, *Forbes*, and the videogame site IGN, Thomsen made barely enough to pay the $850 rent for his room in a three-bedroom apartment in Chelsea. Thomsen had been a full-time freelancer since 2009, when he quit his job as an associate editor at IGN Entertainment in San Francisco and moved to New York, and the grind, paired with a large amount of credit card debt from freelancing, was affecting the quality of his work—and his mental health. "I was stressed out and claustrophobic working as a writer full time. It's a lot of time to spend in your head," he recalls. "Doing something physical where I could listen to podcasts or language courses seemed like a good way to supplement writing financially."

On a friend's recommendation, Thomsen applied to be a house cleaner through an agency in 2012, and for the next two years, he spent a large part of his waking hours dusting, scrubbing, and cleaning. "My average check was maybe $1,400 a month for like 30 hours a week," he says. That check, in turn, afforded him enough to keep publishing stories; eventually, he found a full-time editing job. When he was

interviewing at Condé Nast, he spotted a familiar face: an editor who used to work in an office he used to clean.

Thomsen's stint as a cleaner speaks to a worrisome trend. A 2015 survey by the American Press Institute found that only 13 percent of working journalists in the US have just one job, with no freelance work on the side. A quarter of respondents said they'd taken freelance PR or marketing gigs, another 12 percent taught at a school or university, and one-fifth took on additional work in the news business as freelancers.

The primary motivation for these endeavors was money—not entirely surprising given that 12 percent of respondents said they had suffered pay cuts and layoffs, 8 percent were furloughed, and one-third did not expect to be working in journalism in five years' time.

If landing a job at a newspaper in 1830 "generally seemed to require only 'brain faculties,' not the kind of training, connections, or nest egg that setting up as a lawyer or doctor or banker did," as historian Andie Tucher puts it, the miserable pay, long hours, and "independent and adventurous work" made it appeal mostly to the disreputable sorts unlikely to want or be able to have a family and a stable home. Today, the low pay and long hours remain, but they lend journalism the trappings of a cloistered, exclusive, white-collar profession. Even for those who do prevail, cultural capital doesn't translate to, well, capital.

Still, it's not that journalists are exactly poor. The median wage for reporters and correspondents, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is around $19 per hour, or squarely within the national average. But $19 an hour isn't necessarily enough for anyone living with debt or a family or any extra expenses in an already expensive city. The picture was a little better for editors, with a median hourly wage at $28.25 per hour, but those mid-level jobs tend to be the first targets for layoffs and buyouts. What's more, wages for American workers across the board haven't kept up with inflation, which means reporters today make less than they did in the 1970s in relative terms. (As an editor at *Esquire* in 1975, Nora Ephron paid a freelance writer $1,250 for a feature—a not unheard of price for feature work today.) The situation is the same for new college grads and accomplished authors, part-timers and staff writers, video producers and essayists.

For freelancers in particular, journalism can feel less like a job than a vocation masquerading as a profession and compensated like an art. The essayist Michael Greenberg describes writing as "a mockery of the basic relationship between money and labor" in *Beg, Borrow, Steal*, his 2009 collection of essays about life as a writer in New York City. Perpetually short on cash while writing novels and reviews, Greenberg turns to the side hustle over and over again to support his young family. "In the early 1980s, cured by my first novel of any illusions I'd had about the glories of self-expression, I decided to approach writing as just another part-time venture, like selling cosmetics or driving a cab," he writes.

Greenberg describes the array of gigs he took as a young father to stay afloat, from menial labor to speculating on stocks. In the process, he navigates the class dynamics of the downwardly mobile, "unglamorous poor" young man for whom being broke is, in some way, a choice—Greenberg never went to college and decided to become a writer against the wishes of his father, "a solid member of the middle class." He doesn't glamorize brokeness so much as make an uneasy peace with it. It's a privileged choice that Greenberg was able to make, a choice Thomsen was able to make as well—that survival was something you could do on the side.

Because while journalism these days is very much a profession, says Liz Skewes, chair of the journalism department at University of Colorado-Boulder, it doesn't always look much like a job. "I don't mean it's not professional," she adds. "But I think you have to do it because you love it and you think it matters. And maybe you can make a little money. Just don't count the hours."

Side hustles aren't always a matter of survival; often, they're the price we pay for seeking out more satisfying work. For Caitlin Hu, the geopolitics editor at Quartz, editing art and photography books on the side was a way to diversify the work she does. She says it can be "surprisingly lucrative" but also a welcome break from news, and a way to more creatively collaborate with artists and writers. She often gives the people she meets

their own side hustles: "Being involved in those projects also lets me circulate work to other writers, like hiring former colleagues to fact-check, research," says Hu.

Joe Flood is the author of *The Fires*, a book about New York City in the 1970s, and the CEO of the editorial services firm N2 Communications. Flood realized early in his journalism career that the stories he cared about—mostly Native American affairs and life on the reservation—would not be commercial hits.

"I was always a freelancer, and it was really hard to make a living, even living in South Dakota," he says. "It seemed like knowing editors was as important as having good stories. I never understood the instinct [of] being a reporter. My sense of it was to live and see different things, and translate them to other audiences."

Flood didn't want to compromise his journalistic work, so he wound up doing corporate editing and research on the side to fund his writing. It went so well that he handed off some work to friends and, eventually, started N2 as a kind of clearinghouse for side hustles.

"Journalists are the most underpaid people in the knowledge economy, when you think about credentials and skills and people who can understand and analyze data, write stories, self-motivate, interview people, design," Flood says. "For people from impressive colleges to be clawing at each other to get $50,000 staffer jobs is ridiculous," especially when those jobs are primarily located in cities with a very high cost of living.

Julie Zauzmer, 28, has a very different attitude toward her side hustle. By day, she's a religion reporter for *The Washington Post*. On nights and weekends, she twists balloons. Zauzmer—a Harvard grad and trained clown who used to go by "Zippy"—says last year she made $12,000 performing at birthday parties. The money doesn't hurt, but she insists

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

MY CAREER PATH

Doreen St. Felix

Staff writer at *The New Yorker*

- **At 15, walked into the Housing Works thrift shop on Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights,** offered to "help out," and landed first job.
- Freelanced after college, due largely to relationships cultivated on Twitter with editors at *Pitchfork* and The Hairpin; was eventually approached by Jessica Grose, who hired her as an editor for Lena Dunham's Lenny Letter.
- Worked at MTV News for a year, until 2017, when took a job as a staff writer at *The New Yorker*.

Side hustles all seem to have one thing in common: They often involve doing things for people wealthier than oneself.

that she does it out of love. "If I could choose which I liked better—reporting or balloon-twisting—then I'd do just one," she says. Zauzmer wants to stay at the *Post* "for the rest of my life," but she also sees balloons as a solid Plan B. "It gives me a sense of options," she adds. "There are so many things I'm not going to do. But I really still could be a balloon twister." The ethics of reporting carry over to her side hustle: She turned down a gig twisting balloons for Hillary Clinton "because that was such an obvious conflict."

Reporting can bring about side hustles, too: While researching his book on Cuban boxing champions, the Canadian writer Brin-Jonathan Butler, 38, sparred with some of the most accomplished sportsmen in the world. When he came back to the US and found he couldn't support himself in Manhattan writing for places like *Harper's Magazine* and Salon, he began giving boxing lessons in Central Park. "This seemed like the most viable skill I had," he says.

Now, he says he makes anywhere between $10,000 and $14,000 a year teaching people to punch. And he's at work on his second book. It's about chess—which happens to be his own former side hustle: As a teenager, Butler played games of speed chess against people for money.

"Would I prefer not to have a side hustle? Of course. But I don't know how else to survive without cobbling together hustles. I'm never surprised; something's always allowed me to get by," Butler says.

"I don't know if I'll have one year where it won't happen," he adds. "It's a stressful thing to confront."

Side hustles all seem to have one thing in common: They often involve doing things for people wealthier than oneself, whether it's cleaning their houses, watching or educating their kids, cooking their food, or helping them stay in shape. That's the very nature of capitalism, of course, but when the interactions are direct, questions about class—as well as race and gender—become more apparent.

In her memoir, *Slutever*, based on a blog of the same name, *Vogue* columnist and Vice host Karley Sciortino describes starting out as a sex writer in the mid-2000s in New York City. "On some days, I felt like my life and writing career were going pretty okay—Slutever's readership was growing, I was writing cover stories for *Dazed & Confused* magazine, and I was making a satirical sex-ed Web series for Vice," she writes. The problem? "None of those things paid me any real fucking money."

Her blog "brought in literally zero dollars." Vice "was still in a phase where they insisted the company was doing you a favor by giving you a platform and making you 'cool.'" Her cover stories paid a pittance for a week's worth of work. "Basically, the publishing industry was and is a fucking nightmare," she says, "and despite working really hard, I was well below the poverty line and totally unable to support myself."

One day, on a friend's urging, Sciortino started working as a "sugar baby," sleeping with wealthy men who preferred paying for sex under the pretense that they were helping young women out with their rent, their art, or their careers. "We get really stuck in our social scenes and only hang out with people like us—politically, ideologically, age-wise," Sciortino says. "But I thought it was fun to live in this different

world. Like, why am I at Jean Georges with a fat bond salesman? I like to have conversations with people different from me; as a writer that's valuable."

Peter C. Baker, a writer in Chicago who spent two years, on and off, running errands and preparing meals for well-off families, says he liked the work just fine, but the social dynamics struck him as odd. The work he did was a squarely "downstairs" occupation, but he believes he was hired largely because of his own background—educated, accomplished, and "small-town upper-middle-class." (Baker's father is a doctor).

"The main thing was to be a trustworthy person who had a car and car insurance, but they were into the fact that I had this other thing going on and that maybe they were kind of helping me with that," he says.

Not unlike Sciortino's experience with sugar daddies, it was his class and his ostensible professionalism that made Baker an attractive candidate for the gig. "A huge part of the job was cooking for them—they were rich foodie people. But they didn't even audition me, and I'd never cooked for other people! Not that any of this was explicit, but my writing career was salient somehow."

During his stint as a house cleaner, Thomsen says what struck him most was how manners masked class prejudice and deep, structural inequality—all realizations that inform his journalistic work.

"When I started, I was aware of leaving a demographic—or not leaving it, but not being fully part of it," he says. At the same time, "a lot of people thought, initially, it's safer to have a college-educated white guy come clean. We don't have to worry he'll steal the jewels in the bedroom, or [not] communicate in English."

One moment in particular stayed with him. "I was cleaning in an ad agency one night and I found a pay stub. It was $16,000 for two weeks, after taxes. That's more than I earned that year."

There's nothing that new or surprising about writers and journalists having jobs on the side. Jack London stole and sold oysters. Charles Dickens fixed boots. Even Graydon Carter—he of the high-six-figure salary!—owns restaurants. Nor has journalism ever been that lucrative. For a time, an impoverished Karl Marx wrote dispatches for the *New-York Tribune*. "If only this capitalist New York newspaper had treated him more kindly," John F. Kennedy famously remarked. "I hope all you publishers will bear this lesson in mind the next time you receive a poverty-stricken appeal from abroad for a small increase in the expense account."

It's hard to ignore the seeming ubiquity of the gig economy, and the tendency for an increasing number of jobs to take on a temporary, contingent quality, but government data doesn't reflect the side-hustle trend; according to the BLS, between 1994 and 2014, multiple job holdings among the general population actually fell. Nevertheless, Etienne Lalé, an economist who crunched the numbers, says they might be missing a big part of the story: "What's needed is a new category of workers," he says. "Currently we have classes of work—a government worker; a private, salaried job; self-employed; incorporated; unincorporated; and so on. But it seems to me there's a missing category: workers working for an internet platform like Airbnb without being an employee of it."

In a 2016 essay for Quartz, Catherine Baab-Muguira turned the side hustle on its head. She didn't keep a side hustle so she could write; journalism was her side hustle. "The side hustle offers something worth much more than money: A hedge against feeling stuck and dull and cheated by life," she wrote. Working in marketing by day allowed her to afford not just a mortgage, but the luxury of occasionally doing work she loved.

Anecdotes like Baab-Muguira's make journalism sound akin to knitting or gardening: closer to a hobby than a profession. And it's hard not to see that attitude creeping into pay stubs, contracts, and the number of opportunities to make a living from it. Of course there are reporters who make good money doing it full time. And of course people with reporting, writing, and research skills can earn much more doing something else.

But increasingly, journalism looks like a profession for the young, the hungry, or the independently wealthy. Side hustles tell us that in financial terms, journalists just aren't worth much at all. CJR

Who's the Boss?

The editors of 135 of the country's biggest English-language newspapers are a well-educated bunch: Almost a third have an advanced degree, and they attended private high schools at nearly twice the national rate. But the idea that they're all coastal parachuters is a myth. Many still work in the same area where they grew up or graduated.

Check Their Privilege

73%
are male

60%
have a journalism degree

9 in 10
are white

27%
have an advanced degree

109
different undergraduate colleges and universities are represented in this pool of 135 editors

7%
went to an Ivy League school

No College Degree

At least 5 of 135 editors never finished college at all, including *The New York Times*'s Dean Baquet and the New York *Daily News*'s Jim Rich.

"My lack of a degree always bothered me more than it bothered my colleagues, who only cared about the quality of my work. I realize now that learning journalism in a newsroom instead of a classroom was the greatest blessing of my life.... The lesson from my experience is not that we need to find more applicants without college degrees. It's that we shouldn't automatically disqualify them."

MARK LORANDO,
New Orleans *Times-Picayune*

Those Who Stayed

Each dot represents one newspaper whose editor went to high school within 150 miles of the paper's location

1 in 3

editors are local—they work near where they grew up

Two Editors Went to the Same High School

Editors Jack McElroy and Jill Jorden Spitz both attended Canyon del Oro High School in Arizona.

"My most formative experience in high school was on the wrestling team. It taught me lessons about hard work and adversity that still apply every day to being an editor."

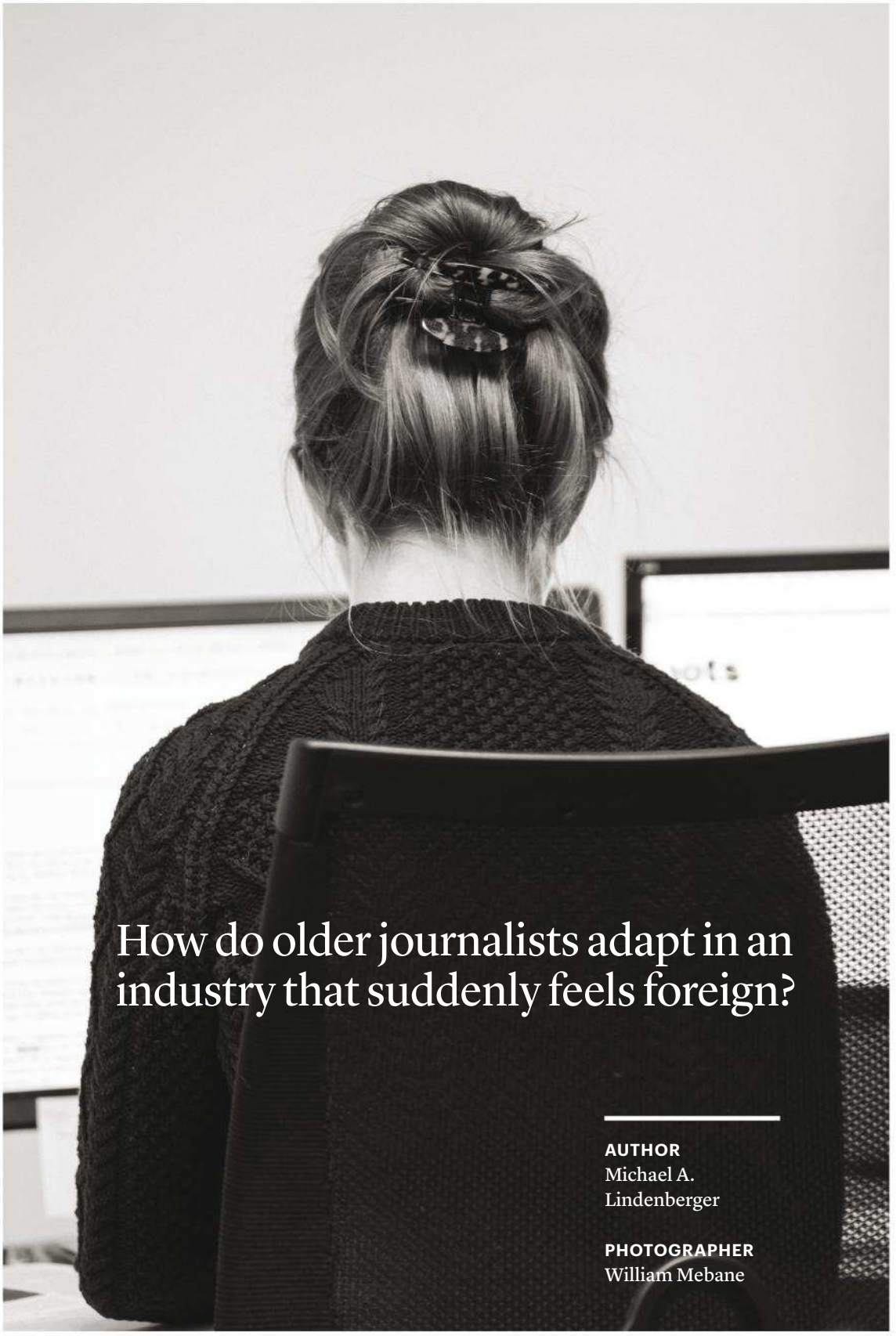
JACK MCELROY
Knoxville *News Sentinel*

"My only experience with the school paper was a single article in which I described someone's 'rye' sense of humor—not the most auspicious entrance into journalism!"

JILL JORDEN SPITZ
Arizona Daily Star

RESEARCH
Jon Allsop
Kelsey Ables
Denise Southwood

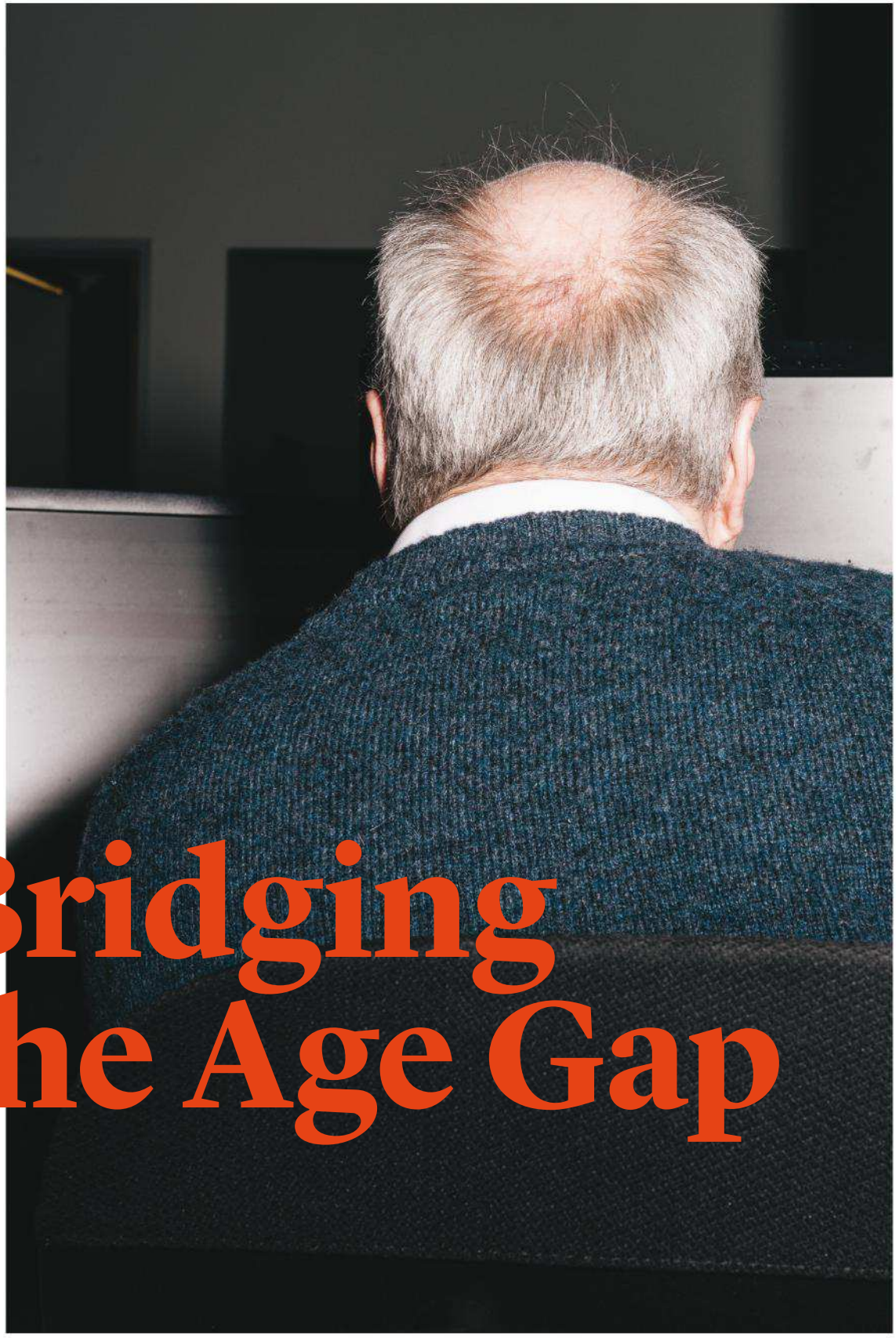
Methodology: CJR compiled data on the backgrounds of the top editors at newspapers with a daily and/or weekend circulation greater than 50,000, according to the Alliance for Audited Media. We included only English-language newspapers, and excluded news and commercial products of larger newspapers, and newspapers with interim editors. Where an editor was responsible for more than one title, we included them only once, under the title with the highest circulation. We also excluded the *Anchorage Daily News*, the Chattanooga *Times Free Press*, *Metro*, and *Warren Weekly* due to a lack of adequate data on their editors. We are missing high school data for 16 editors. Editors' background data was manually collected from a combination of public records searches (including LinkedIn and Facebook) and anonymized surveys returned to us directly. Data accurate as of 03/16/18.



How do older journalists adapt in an industry that suddenly feels foreign?

AUTHOR
Michael A. Lindenberger

PHOTOGRAPHER
William Mebane



Bridging the Age Gap

John Archibald, 55, has seen plenty of change in the Alabama newsroom where he has worked for more than three decades, but none that has run its course faster than in the last six years. In 2012, three newspapers, including *The Birmingham News*, where Archibald started in 1986, merged into the Alabama Media Group with a shared website, AL.com. Of the roughly 100 journalists working in the newsrooms, nearly two-thirds were laid off. Now, roughly half a dozen of those who survived remain on staff after a roster of mostly younger reporters, editors, video journalists, producers, designers, and data whizzes were hired to fill some of the vacancies.

The new company has put a premium on innovation and even entirely new brands as AL.com has steadily grown its online audience. Printed newspapers are now produced just three days a week. Projects like its series of highly produced videos of everyday Alabamians reading verses from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" have won it widespread praise

In the wake of the upheaval, Archibald, who won this year's Pulitzer Prize for commentary for his coverage of state politics, says he initially lost sleep worrying about the job he loved. "The thing that kept me awake at night was the fear of not being able to do that work," he says. Since then, he's mostly put those fears aside, but for mid- and late-career journalists working in American newsrooms, the anxiety is real and comes in many flavors. The changes in Alabama have been dramatic, but they are only a more pronounced expression of the same trend in most American daily newspapers. Reductions in overall headcount—and the replacement of older journalists with younger ones (who bring a native fluency to digital work) through buyouts, layoffs, or even simple attrition—have been underway for the better part of a decade. The American Society of News Editors stopped trying to estimate the number of journalists working for daily US newspapers after 2015, the year it projected fewer than 33,000 employees in daily newsrooms. That figure came down from 55,000 as recently as 2007, and while the fears of what continued cutbacks portend are shared throughout the industry, it is older journalists who are having to struggle to adapt to a field that is altogether different than the one in which they started.

Many of these concerns are not new. More than a decade ago, in 2006, Geneva Overholser, then a professor at Missouri and previously an ombudswoman for *The Washington Post* and editor of the *Des Moines Register*, published "On Behalf of Journalism: A Manifesto for Change." In what she called "a document of hope for a difficult time," she urged journalists to shed their understandable "comfort in the way things were" and rethink the profession from top to bottom. "The long-building plaint is now undeniable: Journalism as we know it is over," she wrote.

This call for a widespread re-evaluation of newsrooms, from the boardroom mechanics of who owns the news, to new thinking about

GENERATION GAP
The oldest and youngest members of the *Washington City Paper* newsroom: Housing Complex Reporter Morgan Baskin, 22, (left) and photographer Darrow Montgomery, 54.

(Previous spread) *Washington City Paper* Editor Alexa Mills (left) and *USA Today* National Editor for Breaking News Michael James

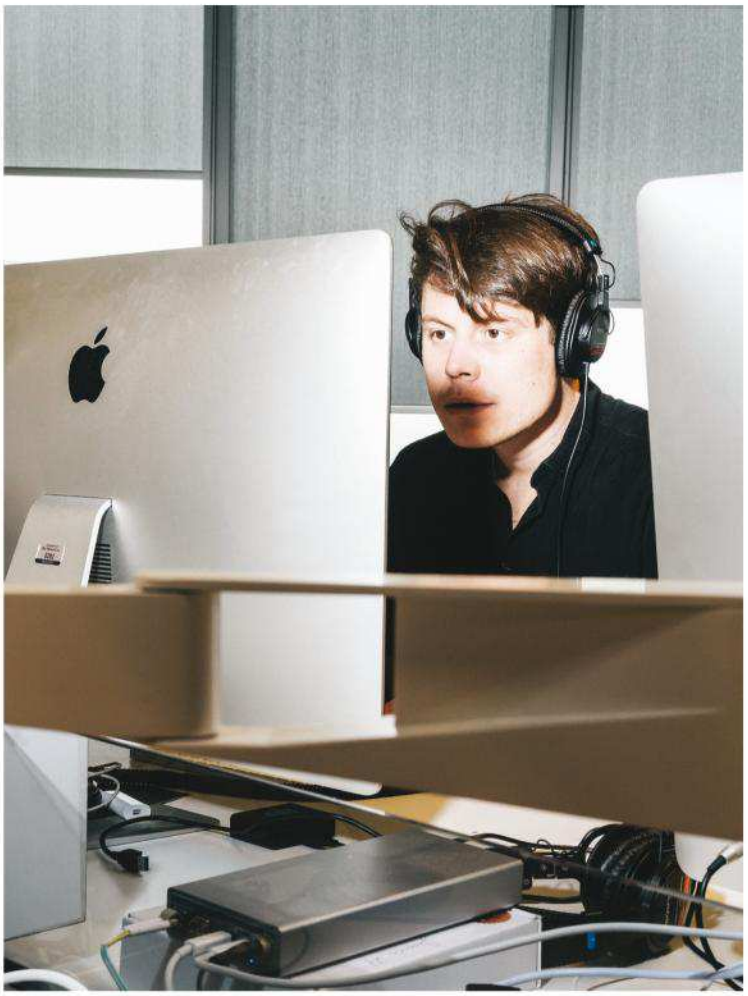
age-old taboos as basic as front-page ads and as complex as notions of journalistic objectivity, makes for strange reading 12 years later. So much about journalism as it is practiced today seems wholly new compared to 2006, midway through George W. Bush's second term and the year an embryonic Twitter first launched as a text-messaging service. Deadlines are no longer merely tight; they are constant. A story that once would have entirely dominated a news cycle is dated and pushed off the homepage within the hour. Stories are no longer written, edited, and published; they're produced, often matched with graphics, video, a social media campaign, and online reader engagement strategies.

Fielding these challenges are newsrooms full of veteran reporters scrambling to adapt to and even embrace the digital priorities of their bosses, not to mention the digital expectations of their readers, and of younger, digital-native journalists for whom the work habits and approaches of their older colleagues can seem prehistoric. And yet, when you talk to veteran reporters and other journalists who remain, such overarching worries about the future of the business can also seem quite remote. Some are simply too busy, others too driven, to let the uncertainties that many say have always shrouded daily journalism worry them overmuch.

"I don't want to be Pollyannaish. We've lost a lot of people and lost a lot of capacity. It's scary. But I don't sit around and pine for the old days," Archibald says. "I am a columnist. I've got my head down worrying about what tomorrow's column is going to be about. I don't have time to worry about the rest of it."

His colleague across the newsroom, Carol Robinson, 54, is another survivor of the 2012 cull, and has been writing about cops and public safety for most of her three decades at the paper. She's got what Archibald calls a "beautiful sickness," in that she files more stories than many reporters can fathom—and has the out-of-sight readership numbers to show for it.

"I write at least five stories every day," Robinson says, adding that she probably averages eight per day, and occasionally posts as many as 15 or more. Going digital has not changed her job all that much, she says. "The difference is that when we were strictly print, we didn't always have the space for me to write 13 or 18 stories a day, so we'd pick and choose the best ones for print. Now, I throw them all up there." Many reporters might balk at that kind of production. But Robinson says she's found the pace empowering because it lets her connect with readers in ways not previously possible. "Years ago, we had an actual edict: Don't do missing persons stories unless police suspect foul play. But now, we can do those stories. That's great, because it might just be a 14-year-old runaway, but I can throw up a quick post about that in five minutes and maybe that kid will get found. There is a real public service in that." Her bosses give her the time to take deeper dives when she asks for it, though she says she rarely does. "It works for my psychology," she says. "I have a short attention span and I don't want to spend weeks and weeks on the same story. That's why we have investigative reporters."



Still, intergenerational tensions can flare when a print-oriented newsroom reorients itself into a digital-first website. A story produced quickly for a Web audience can strike a veteran reporter as embarrassingly thin. Some digital natives arrive in the newsroom so accustomed to creating—and consuming—stories through social media channels that they're left wondering

SAME VIEW, FROM A DISTANCE
Mic Shooter/Editor George Steptoe (left), and HuffPost DC Copy Desk Editor Don Frederick

what kind of world could have produced a reporter who spends 20 precious minutes on deadline searching through a stack of just-dumped city documents. Others may look at a respected critic's output and wonder why so many resources are devoted to cultural pieces that rarely vie for the top of most-read analytics reports.

These kinds of tensions inevitably put reporters and editors from one generation at odds with those from the next. Patrick Ferrucci, an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Colorado-Boulder, recently completed a research project in which he interviewed more than two dozen digital journalists who were both veterans and newer entrants to the field. In sometimes overt language, both older and younger reporters spoke with near-contempt for their colleagues on the other side of the generational divide.

"We get these fresh-faced kids who know all about Pro Tools and Storify or whatever's the flavor of the day, but can they interview someone? No," said one journalist with a decade's worth of experience. "Do they understand the difference between journalism and P-fucking-R? No. But if I need them to cut a video, well, there they are. That's not journalism. That's an IT person."

The views from the younger side of the newsroom were no less caustic. One reporter with less than two years on the job told Ferrucci, "Everybody at [my organization] who's been here for any real amount of time talks about certain standards, like they came down from God. My teachers [in college] did, too. I think they do this not because they believe this is the right way to journalize, but because it gives them power." A young staffer on the digital side of a legacy broadcast outfit said, "All these old white men like to scream and wave their arms that journalism is dying. They say, Oh my, it's dying, guys. But they're the ones cutting budgets and trying to do things the same way they've always done things. Did that work out okay for you, guys? Shit no, it didn't. We need to move on from how people did it in the fucking 1600s. Get over that shit….I want to be like, Your model died, dude. Seriously, we need to reinvent journalism as we know it. Throw out the playbook."

That kind of blunt language may not often be used out loud in newsrooms, but it's hard

to talk to journalists anywhere today who don't feel those tensions at some level. At a few places, though, the natural suspicion of one generation by another has been eased by something as simple as working together closely on small teams with common goals.

Doris Truong, 42, has nearly 15 years on staff at *The Washington Post*, where she began as a copy editor and is now the weekend homepage editor. Widely traveled and with stints working on top prize-winning projects, Truong served as the 2011-12 president of the Asian American Journalists Association, part of her lifelong work as a champion for newsroom diversity. After a decade at the *Post*, she switched four years ago from the copy desk to the homepage team to master new skills she knew would become increasingly relevant as digital products took on more importance. Now she's in the middle of frequent experiments at the *Post*—which management, led by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, routinely describes as a "technology company"—on new ways to bring its journalism to larger audiences and more subscribers. "To stay relevant in my job, I have to be aware of where the industry is going," she says, "and, specifically, of all the tools we are using in our newsroom."

The *Post* is in rarefied company, in that it has the resources to maintain old-school journalism skills (investigative reporting, narrative journalism, blanket news coverage), while also investing in both the pricey expertise required by technology firms (engineers, designers, data scientists) and new storytelling forms (documentary-style video, virtual reality).

In a speech in 2014, *Post* editor Marty Baron praised the new, largely younger, primarily digitally oriented arrivals as the paper's future. But he also mapped out the divisions in his newsroom. "These young journalists are true digital natives. And it shows. Journalists of a previous generation can learn new digital skills. They can adapt. They can work hard and diligently at telling stories in new ways. And they can be really good at it. But digital is not their native language," he said. "It's like those who immigrate to this country as an adult. They can speak perfect, even elegant, English. And yet their accents are unlikely to disappear. These new journalists enter the field without an accent that hints of foreignness to the new medium."

When editors were asking for volunteers to work alongside a new Snapchat team, Truong eagerly raised her hand. She spent two months working on stories specifically designed for that youth-powered platform. The lessons she learned influence her decisions on headlines and other homepage calls. "I am asking, How can we present something to a home page audience that isn't wildly different from what they'd expect," she says, "but which engages with new audiences, too?"

Truong has watched as even small changes in the newsroom—say, the migration to Slack as the primary interoffice communication tool—have been met with varying degrees of discomfort. Some reporters have embraced the new medium, and others still seem stuck on email, she says. In the same way, she says not all reporters have been equally quick to adopt the reigning ethos in the digital age that values speed over thoroughness, at least when news is first breaking.

"The biggest thing in recent years is embracing the need to not even just get a first draft online, but getting a part of a first draft up as soon as it is ready. We've learned that if you get published first, you'll have a better chance of grabbing an audience that will stick with you as you update the story," she says. Wait too long, and that audience is following a competitor's developing story instead. That can be a tough lesson to learn for reporters who came up in newsrooms where the highest value was placed on the smartest, most thorough, and best-written takes.

She says her work with the Snapchat team didn't just help her engage with younger readers; she's also found benefit in working more closely with some of the youngest staff members in the newsroom. Many of her teammates during that period were 10 or 15 years younger, she says. "It really got me to think about how they think we should be connecting with our audience."

That's something not every mid-career journalist is willing to do—learn from someone with far less experience. But Truong says that education has helped her to stay relevant in her own job, too.

Digital transformation in American newsrooms has meant changes for everyone, from small-town newspaper reporters to editors at national dailies, and in radio, television, and other media. Andrea Stahlman, 47, is the news director at Hearst's WLKY-TV in her hometown of Louisville, where she's worked since 1993. She's seen change affect her own career, and has watched as journalists who work for her have had to adjust, too.

People trained as journalists are used to learning new things, but Stahlman says the larger changes she's witnessed have been in the ways journalists have been forced to change their attitudes. "Gone are the days of saving a story for a newscast," she says. "Longtime reporters had to be retrained to not only learn new technologies, but also change their daily workflow." Another change? Constant expectations that reporters engage on social media. "This is not natural for longtime journalists, [and] it's second nature for those who grew up with mobile and social technology," she says.

Amid all that motion, something remains stalwart. "The key is having passion for the work.... If you are a professional journalist with a passion for getting to the truth," she says, "then new technologies and new ways of content distribution are just skills you must acquire to do the job you love."

For Archibald, the Pulitzer-winning columnist in Birmingham, the rise of digital journalism hasn't swept him into such a different job. He keeps his head down searching for the next day's column, even as he says he's enjoying the larger audience that now reads his work. Journalism has always been a roller coaster ride, he points out, and reporting on politics in a state like Alabama is always going to provide unexpected highs. "One year, you're putting someone in jail, and the next you're wondering if you're even connecting," he says. "But whenever things look bleakest, it's the news that is going to save you." CJR

SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

MY CAREER PATH

Jenni Monet

Freelance journalist

› **Worked at the Cherokee Nation Bingo Hall,** before it became a full-blown casino. Dressed in a tuxedo-like uniform, ended up being so bad at the job that "the managers thought I was stealing money from the bingo hall. Turns out, I was just really bad at fast math."

› Worked through undergrad with several jobs, including one as a demo ski technician at a resort in the winter, and another as a reservationist with the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad and Museum in the summer. Also had stints as a cocktail waitress, hardware store employee, and gymnastics instructor (having been an all-American cheerleader in high school).

› Has reported in Albuquerque, Durango, Tulsa, Alaska, Qatar, and New York City, where has also worked for local broadcast stations, Public Radio International, and Al Jazeera America.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

Nine percent

of media industry jobs are now data, analytics, and platform positions. That's great news for people who have these new skills—less so for those who don't.

AUTHORS
Matthew Weber and
Allie Kosterich

Not all the journalism job news is bad.

From storied publications like *The New York Times* to digital natives like BuzzFeed, hiring at newsrooms has come to include a whole new category of gig: data, analytics, and platform reporting. This new breed of data-savvy journalist has the chops to build databases, code websites, and scrape APIs, but still has the requisite reporting and writing skills. They could be a data journalist at *The Wall Street Journal* or a senior social media strategy editor of audience development at the *Times*. Quartz has a Things Team dedicated to "data-driven, visual, and otherwise creative journalism." It's an employment bright spot in an industry plagued by financial trouble.

We wanted to see what impact new categories of jobs are having on the makeup of newsrooms, but reliable data on the topic are hard to come by. So we conducted our own survey, with the help of LinkedIn. We analyzed the work history data of more than 6,000 newsroom employees on LinkedIn to examine the impact of data, analytics, and platform (DAP) jobs.

In our survey, we found that DAP jobs now make up 9 percent of the jobs in the media industry—a number that is all but certain to rise. Newsroom managers are increasingly interested in hiring reporters who have skills that extend beyond the traditional basics of writing and research; advanced skills such as computational analysis, coding, and multiplatform knowledge are becoming critical.

That's great news for journalists who have those new skills; less so for those who don't. But even for them, all is not lost. Rather, the trends in our survey point to a new opportunity for career growth, given training and time.

For at least a decade, researchers studying the publishing industry have cautioned about a skills gap in newsrooms. In a 2008 study, the University of Leicester's Konstantinos Saltzis and Roger Dickinson found that although there was broad industry recognition of the importance of digital skills, the concept of a multimedia journalist was slow to take root. Likewise, a 2014 Poynter white paper observed that the media business was lagging behind other industries in the way it valued multimedia and other digital storytelling skills.

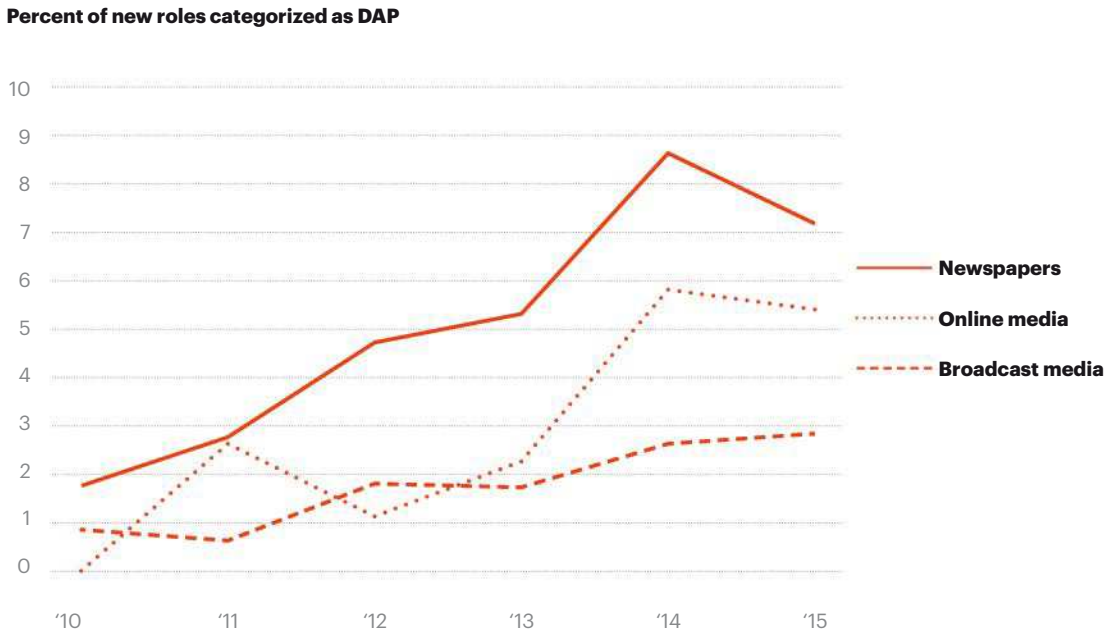
Meanwhile, the demand for those jobs continues to surge. A 2014 analysis of UK and US journalism job postings found that the number of mentions of "mobile skills" as a prerequisite qualification increased from 2 percent in 2010 to 27 percent in 2012. In the same study, references to experience with mobile apps increased from 10 percent to 42 percent, respectively. Put in other terms, the demand for such skills in job postings alone quadrupled in just two years. But the growth in hirings and actual positions has not kept pace. Moreover, the relatively sluggish growth in job postings is even more remarkable given the nearly historic growth in jobs in the United States since 2010.

To figure out just how prominent DAP-based jobs are now, we collected the employment histories for 6,116 newsroom staffers and freelancers for newspaper, broadcast, and digital-first companies in New York City in 2016. The 24,598 jobs worked by those individuals were manually aggregated from LinkedIn starting in 2016 and tracing back in time as far as possible. Data were verified using other sources, then coded for analysis. This study includes LinkedIn data for employees who worked at 16 news media companies: ABC News, TheBlaze, BuzzFeed, CBS News, The Daily Beast, Fox News, HuffPost, Mic, MSNBC, NBC News, New York *Daily News*, *The New York Times*, NowThis News, Patch Media, Slate, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Data job descriptions typically mix terms such as *audience analysis*, *data*, *engagement*, *mobile technology*, *platforms*, *products*, and *social media*. On the other hand, traditional journalism job descriptions include key terms such as *broadcaster*, *copywriter*, *copy editor*, *designer*, *producer*, *programmer*, *programming*, *publisher*, *reporter*, *writer*, and *operations*, among others.

Understanding how these roles operate in a newsroom can often be gleaned by how the newsroom describes itself. BuzzFeed, for example, describes itself as an "innovation obsessed…venture-backed tech

Where the Jobs Are (For Now)



SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, and Current Employment Statistics survey

company with an engineering team focused on building the media platform for today's world, and the future," whereas the *Daily News* describes itself as "an American newspaper based in New York City."

Perhaps not surprisingly, our research finds that BuzzFeed recruits heavily from a diverse array of companies, including a number of traditional news media companies and interactive publishers (e.g., ABC News, Viacom, and Disney Interactive), whereas the *Daily News* draws from a far less diverse selection of companies within the news media industry, and focuses hiring efforts on traditional news media outlets (e.g., the *New York Post* and *The New York Times*).

Today, nearly one in 10 journalism jobs in New York City belongs to this new breed. But as demand for these roles has grown, other jobs have dwindled.

In our research, we found that the percentage of traditional job roles decreased across sectors. In online media, new traditional jobs decreased by 8 percent relative to other job roles; in newspapers, the number was 9 percent; and in broadcast media, 5 percent. On the other hand, there was a notable increase in the amount of data, analytics, and platform roles within both the newspaper and online sectors, which amounts to a net gain in jobs.

The increasing importance of data, analytics, and platform roles is more apparent as we examine the specific nature of these positions. In 2010 and 2011, there were only 18 new DAP roles listed in newspaper and online media companies. The majority of these roles were social media editors and social media coordinators. In 2014 and 2015, there were 97 DAP roles listed.

The Wall Street Journal, for example, hired both a mobile editor and a director of social media and engagement during that period. *The New York Times* accounted for 24 hires in this category, bringing on a mobile editor, a news application developer, a lead growth editor, and a director of audience development.

We collected employment histories for 6,116 newsroom staffers and freelancers in New York City.

Where the Jobs Come From

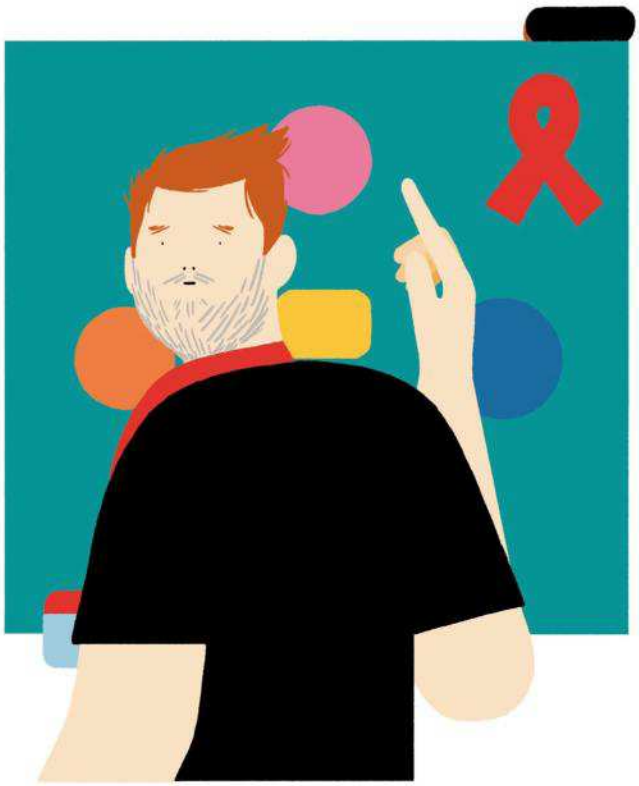
	Percent of data jobs hired in 2015 from newspaper companies	Percent of data jobs hired in 2015 from technology companies
Wall Street Journal	20%	0%
New York Times	14%	1%
New York Daily News	28%	8%
BuzzFeed	19%	10%
Huffington Post	9%	4%

MY CAREER PATH

Choire Sicha

Styles editor of *The New York Times*

- First jobs included telemarketing, being a coffee boy at World Coffee in Los Angeles, and a barista at Espresso Bongo in San Francisco.
- **Became a health educator and HIV test counselor at the Larkin Street Youth Center at age 19,** and went on to work as an assistant editor at the People with Aids Coalition, a paralegal at the HIV Law Project, and an assistant director at Visual AIDS.
- Became the editor in chief and editorial director of Gawker, then freelanced, then worked as a senior editor at the *New York Observer*, then went back to Gawker, freelanced again, co-founded The Awl, went to Vox Media, and, finally, was hired as the *Times*'s Styles editor.



SERGIO MEMBRILLAS

Similar positions were created at Fox News (social media director) and BuzzFeed (social media editor), among others.

When broadcast newsrooms are included, the number of new DAP roles for 2014 through 2015 jumps to 144, of which 40 percent were filled by employees who previously had not been working in news media companies. Usually, this would signal a migration from other industries. But that's not what we found. There was no significant influx of employees from outside industries. There were some hires from technology companies such as Google, but those roles aren't central, nor influential, to the newsrooms we studied. The growth in these skills, and these jobs, is coming from within the industry.

Outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, HuffPost, and Condé Nast are the important influencers in the companies we surveyed. They occupy central positions in the hiring network, as many employees working in New York City media passed through these companies during the five-year period of our study. Functioning as training grounds, they provide many employees with early on-the-job education that serves to shape subsequent years of their careers.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the *Times* dominates the New York City media landscape. A large number of employees in our survey worked in data, analytics, or platform roles at *The New York Times*, then went to work for other companies. The same can be said of *The Wall Street Journal* and HuffPost. This does not mean these companies are subject to high turnover; rather, the numbers suggest these employees are heavily recruited by other companies, insinuating that companies such as the *Times* lead the pack in innovation.

For all the doom-and-gloom projections on the state of the industry, there is also hope for those who work within it. The news business may be slow to adapt to the revolutions of other industries, but it continues to prioritize journalistic skills, creating growth and opportunities for those who seek them. Still, if the industry is to transform successfully, it must quicken its pace toward innovation. Hiring is where that quickening begins. CJR

The Kicker.

Keep the conversation going with our weekly podcast, *The Kicker*. CJR staffers take you behind the scenes on the latest stories and talk with leading journalists to analyze the trends reshaping media.

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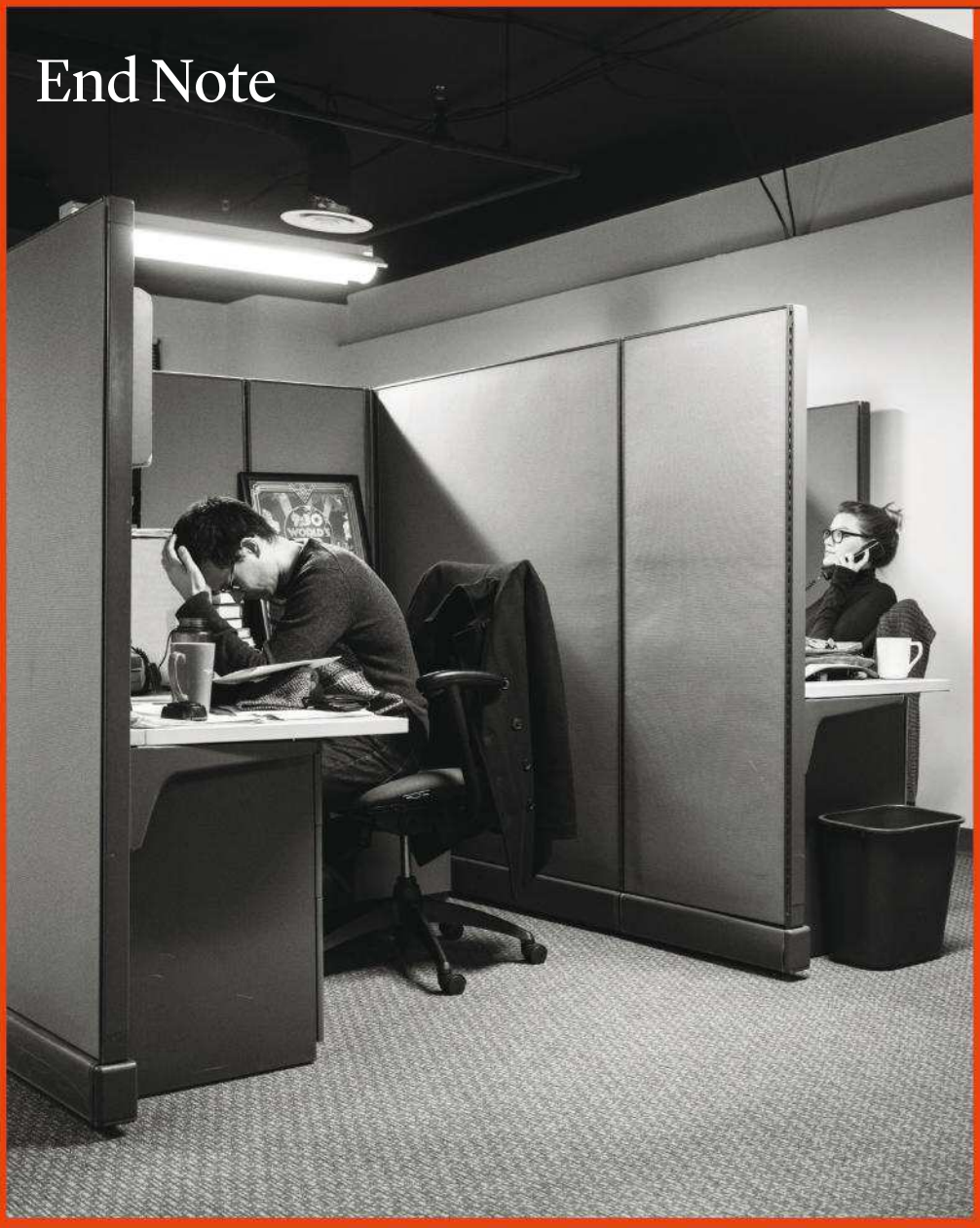
End Note



Reporters Andrew Giambrone (left) and Morgan Baskin, *Washington City Paper*.

To be a journalist, for about as long as people have been calling themselves journalists, has been to "love the truth," as the 1765 edition of Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* put it. There is no talk in that entry of salaries or business models, let alone audience development or native advertising. The existential angst that so many in the industry feel isn't just the worry about paying rent and buying groceries (though it's those things, too), it's about whether people will be able to continue their passion, whether they will still be able to consider themselves journalists. Working as a journalist is in the end, about the work.

—Gabriel Snyder

PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM MEBANE

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